

SIX GREAT TRAVELLERS

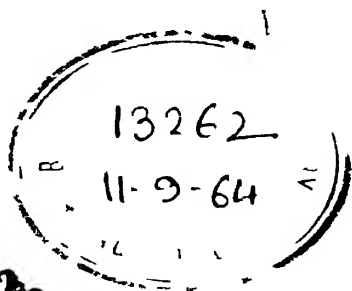
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SIX GREAT TRAVELLERS

SMITH . ANSON . STANHOPE
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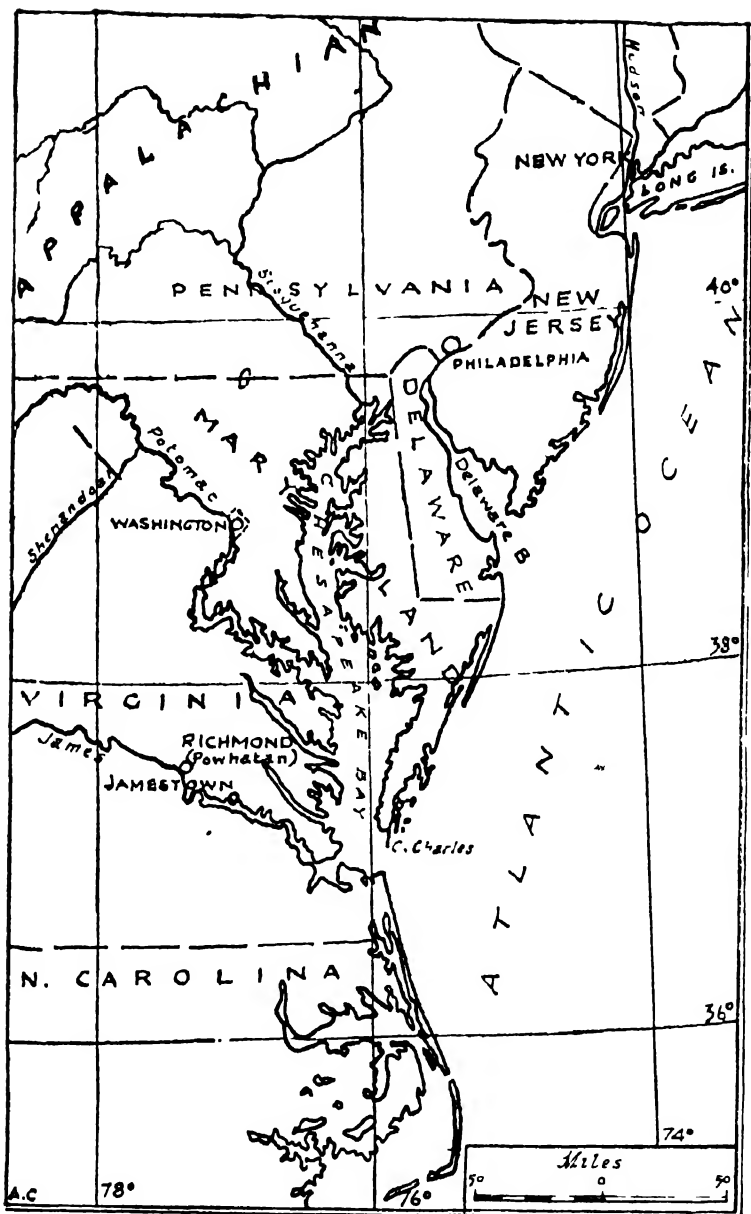
BY
JOHN LENNOX COOK



HAMISH HAMILTON
LONDON

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I

CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH (1580-1631)

JOHN SMITH—could any name be further removed from the spirit and glamour of daring enterprise? Yet in all the annals of Elizabethan exploration, piracy and adventure, few stories compare for sheer excitement with the fabulous escapades of John Smith. The exploits of Raleigh, ambitious and debonair seeker of gold, or of Drake, that raffish highwayman of the Spanish Main, pale as we watch John Smith blazing his adventurous trail across two continents.

No man, surely, has faced death more frequently and with such extraordinary nonchalance; no man has ever won more last-minute reprieves than he did; no man's life has been packed with quite such a variety of dangerous and romantic situations.

During his adventure-studded career he was cast in many different roles: soldier of fortune, student of war, slayer of Turks, pirate, slave, and above all, coloniser. For out of this hot-headed and irrepressible youth emerged a man of iron-will, intelligence and integrity, who became the first successful colonial administrator, who became nothing less than the founder of the United States of America.

At the tender age of fifteen, while still at Louth Grammar School in Lincolnshire, 'his minde' (as he quaintly wrote of himself later) 'being even then set upon brave adventures', John Smith was already selling his books and satchel and all that he had to run away to sea.

His plans were thwarted by the sudden death of his father. Under the sterner eye of his guardians he was sent to work as an apprentice to Thomas Sendall of King's Lynn, 'the greatest merchant of those parts', and the young Smith, confident of being despatched on merchants' business, waited patiently in the counting-house for something exciting to happen. Nothing exciting happened.

Then Lord Willoughby, part of whose estate John's father had farmed, sent his younger son to Orleans in France to join his elder son, who was studying there.

Somehow John Smith persuaded those concerned to let him accompany him. This was the beginning. His lodestar was adventure and he followed it from now on without hesitation or backward look. He must have smiled when after six weeks in Orleans he was ordered home. For, disregarding orders, he set off for Paris; six weeks developed into four years.

There he was: a youth of sixteen, with just ten shillings in his pocket, alone in a foreign land—a hazardous situation, one would have thought; but John Smith was in his element.

The ten shillings in his pocket (it must have been a little less by the time he reached Paris) soon attracted the attentions of a Scotsman, David Hume, who gave the boy letters of introduction to influential friends in Scotland and in the meantime quickly dissipated the innocent youth's slender resources. Suddenly, then, he found himself all but penniless. He managed to get back as far as Le Havre. The obvious thing now was to return to Scotland where, by delivering his letters of introduction, he confidently expected to find fame and fortune at the court of James IV. Whether it was shortage of funds that prevented this, or whether the prospect of fighting proved irresistible, we do not know, but instead of going home he joined a company of English soldiers

under Captain Joseph Duxbery, who was at the time waging war against the Catholic league. To John Smith's disappointment peace was shortly concluded, but his spirits quickly soared again when Captain Duxbery carried his banner into the Low Countries to continue the struggle against the enemies of Protestantism.

Of these early years as a soldier John Smith is oddly reticent. All that we know is that, after studying the arts of warfare for three years in a tough and practical way, he took himself and his letters of introduction to Scotland and was shipwrecked off Holy Island. He managed to struggle ashore but for some time was too ill to move on, and when he did it was only to find that Hume's friends had 'neither money nor means to make him a courtier'. So he returned to his village-home, Willoughby.

One might have expected a young man back from the wars to have revelled in the welcome he received. But no, he was soon bored at being the object of continual interest, and retired to what he describes as 'a little wooddie pasture', where he built himself a hut, and divided his time between study and hunting. For study he chose the works of Marcus Aurelius and Machiavelli—past masters in the arts of war, and for hunting he chose the deer that doubtless belonged to Lord Willoughby.

This early retirement from active life lasted only a few months. He had put his thoughts in order and now prepared to take a little physical exercise at the expense of those Infidel Turks, whose arrogance in Eastern Europe clearly demanded the application of some of his newly-acquired Machiavellian theories.

The journey to Hungary was not without digression and incident. For the second time he was to fall into the hands of confidence tricksters; for the second time too, the bait was letters of introduction—this time to the

Duke de Mercoeur, who was commander-in-chief of the armies of the Hungarian Emperor. John Smith met these four 'arrant cheats', as he called them later, in Holland.

One of them posed as a nobleman, and, lured on by the prospect of meeting the Duchess of Mercoeur, John Smith accompanied him and his confederates by boat to France. As the boat lay at anchor in the port of St. Valery and the passengers waited to be rowed ashore, the 'nobleman' persuaded the captain to land him first with all the baggage. Neither the 'nobleman' nor the baggage was seen again. John Smith landed with exactly one penny in his pocket, and without possessions. But by some freak chance, while tramping through a wood near Dinan he came face to face with one of the four villains, and set upon him so savagely that he confessed his villainy even to the French peasants who, seeing the fight, had hurried to his rescue.

Revenge had been sweet, but materially it left him no better off. Hopefully he made himself known to the Earl of Ployer, who had lived for a time in England. This hospitable nobleman entertained the young traveller royally. Off the East coast of North America there is a point called Cape Ployer, named by John Smith—a man who, it is pleasant to record, never forgot a kindness.

Refreshed and enriched, John Smith left his host and travelled widely through France, always showing a special interest in fortifications and defence-works. At last he came to Marseilles and took a ship bound for Italy. The weather was abominable. The pilgrim passengers, driven by storms first into Toulon and again into Nice, began to view the Protestant Englishman as an evil influence in whose company they would never safely reach their destination. They therefore threw him overboard into the raging sea. It seemed that he must drown. But he was a tenacious fighter. He struck out for the nearest

shore and eventually dragged himself on to the sands of an uninhabited island.

Here he was seen by a Breton cargo boat, that was seeking refuge from the storm. La Roche, the captain, having taken the castaway on board and then discovered he was a friend of the Earl of Ployer, treated him with the greatest respect. They sailed to Alexandria and after unloading cargo there cruised about the Mediterranean, hoping to intercept some treasure-ship bringing Oriental fineries to the Merchant Princes of Venice. Such a treasure-ship now hove in sight with bellying sails, and weighed down with sumptuous silks and velvets. Seeing the raider she fled, wishing only to preserve the wealth with which she was laden. But in the running fight she got crippled. Escape was out of the question: she turned to defend herself. In a thunder of broadsides the raider closed in. Twice the Bretons boarded her: each time they were repulsed. Meanwhile the treasure-ship was not idle, for suddenly the raider caught fire. While part of the crew battled to quench the flames, the rest, under the eye of their furious captain, blazed away until at last the Venetian could only sink or surrender. She surrendered.

When Captain La Roche had taken on board as much treasure as his ship would hold, he allowed the Venetian to proceed, and so vast had been her cargo that even now she would have been a valuable prize had other pirate ships attacked her.

Judging by the extent of his prize-money, John Smith's part in the engagement must have been considerable. And besides, having his once empty pockets now bulging with gold, he could also consider himself an experienced sailor, well practised in the arts of naval warfare. However, even piracy could not long divert him from his original purpose, so saying goodbye to the Breton captain at Antibes he moved East into Italy, until he

arrived finally at the University town of Graz in Austria.

Here he met 'many brave gentlemen of good qualitie'. Letters of introduction, hitherto such disastrous things in his young life, now served as passports into the highest military circles where he met Lord Ebersbaugh, Baron Kisell, commander of artillery, and the Earl of Meldri, in whose regiment John Smith was to serve, and whom he now accompanied to Vienna.

The Turkish armies were at this time carrying all before them. They had captured Kanizsa, a town south-east of Graz, and were now besieging Ober Limbach, a powerfully fortified Hungarian town on the river Raab between Vienna and Budapest. Despondency among the Christian forces was rife, and when Lord Ebersbaugh, charged with the defence of Ober Limbach, was surrounded and faced possible annihilation, the situation looked blacker than ever.

However, among the thousands of Christian officers and men was John Smith, and it was not long before his dynamic presence was felt.

Clearly the only way to bring relief to the forces locked up in the beleaguered city was by a simultaneous attack from within and without. But since communications between the two separated forces had been cut, joint action had been impossible to organise.

By chance (or was it remarkable foresight?), during their brief acquaintanceship, John Smith had taught his noble friend, Lord Ebersbaugh, a signalling system, a kind of primitive morse-code. Now, led by guides, he stole through the night and climbed a mountain seven miles away from the besieged city, and in the darkness began to flash by means of great torches a plan of action. There was no response. But John Smith refused to give up. And at last there were answering lights. Contact had been made 'On Thursday at night I will charge on the East. At the alarum, sally you.' A plan had been adopted.

But there was still another problem. The Turkish forces were encamped on both sides of the river. Combined, they outnumbered the Christians by more than two to one. Smith's problem was to see that during the attack they did *not* combine. So he set up an enormous length of cord, along which he tied thousands of matches tipped with gunpowder.

On the night of the attack the explosive flares of thousands of matches successfully contained half the Turkish army along the further bank. The other half on the other bank found themselves all at once assaulted from two sides. In the battle that followed one third of the enemy forces was slain or drowned. Two thousand of Kisell's army managed to force their way into the garrison. The Turks retreated in confusion and the separated Christian forces were at last re-united. John Smith, whose cunning had been the prime factor in raising the siege, was promoted to captain of two hundred and fifty horsemen.

Success seems to have inspired the Christian leaders to attempt to free the whole province of Transylvania from the grip of the Turks. A three-pronged operation was set in motion, and John Smith, following as always the fortunes of the Earl of Meldri, was concerned, under the generalship of the Duke de Mercœur (to whom those four French imposters had once promised Smith letters of introduction) with the capturing of the town of Stuhlweissenburg—a seemingly impregnable fortress.

So strongly fortified was the town that the Turks were not only able to defend it with ease, they could even sally forth and inflict enormous losses on the forces laying siege to it. Countless Hungarians, Germans and Frenchmen, that comprised the motley Christian armies, had been destroyed in this way.

For centuries this historic town had been the traditional crowning and burial place of Hungarian kings.

Now it had been in Turkish hands for some sixty years. For some sixty years Christian armies had stood impotently before its powerfully protected walls. No one, however, until the coming of John Smith, had thought of assaulting it with 'fiery dragons'.

These bombs, as devised by John Smith, consisted of small earthen pots filled with gunpowder and sprinkled with musket bullets and then covered with a strong cloth dipped in oil and camphor.

Having learnt from escaped prisoners which parts of the town were most thickly populated, John Smith let loose his bomb-shells with the aid of slings, and records jubilantly that 'at midnight, upon the alarum, it was a fearful sight to see the short flaming course of their flight in the aire: but presently after their fall, the lamentable noise of the miserable slaughtered Turks was most wonderfull to heare'. Part of the town subsequently caught fire, and not long afterwards the walls were stormed and the town capitulated. The Earl of Meldri himself took the Turkish pasha captive.

During the winter the Duke de Mercoeur mysteriously died after a banquet, and we find the Earl of Meldri, and therefore, of course, Captain John Smith, joining forces with Prince Sigismund Bathori, whose chief concern was the town of Reigall held by a roguish horde of 'Turks, Tartars, Renegades, and Banditti'.

The fortress stood in high ground and looked down and across a broad plain. From this vantage point and from behind their formidable battlements they watched contemptuously the Christian army laboriously erecting its artillery sites and generally entrenching itself in expectation of a bitter and long drawn out campaign. Between the two battle lines lay no-man's land, a kind of flat arena. Here remarkable things took place.

Bored by their enemies' prolonged preparations, the Turks began to mock them from their ramparts and fling

abuse at them, and finally sent out a challenge to 'any Captain that had the command of a Company' to meet the Lord Turbashaw in single combat for the purpose of entertaining the ladies.

The challenge was accepted; lots were drawn; and the honour fell to Captain John Smith. A truce was arranged. On to the Turkish ramparts and in front of them, from the Christian tents and trenches, the spectators surged to watch the contest. Then from the Turkish ranks emerged the Lord Turbashaw, splendidly apparalled, his shoulders swept back with wings made of eagles' feathers decorated with gold and silver and precious stones. He was led out by a janissary bearing his lance and two others marched on either side of his charger. Then to the blare of trumpets but with only a page to lead him, out rode John Smith. The encounter was short and dramatic. For at the first furious charge, John Smith struck the Turk straight through the helmet and he fell mortally wounded to the ground. The heroic Captain then cut off his head and returned with it to his wildly cheering followers.

Maddened by the death of his friend, another Turk, named Grualgo, challenged Smith to fight him for the Turbashaw's head. The next day the arena once again was filled with expectant soldiers and once again the Turkish ramparts were lined with all those ladies who had so longed to see 'some court-like pastime'. And once again John Smith came trotting out with that same quiet confidence to fight for his life.

The two men measured up to one another and charged. In this first clash both lances were smashed. The Turk, almost unhorsed, drew his pistol, and John Smith drew his. The Englishman was struck by a bullet on part of his armoured body, but retained his balance; the Turk, struck on the left arm, was less fortunate. For a moment he struggled desperately to control his horse, failed, and

was thrown to the ground, and there lay at Smith's mercy. Another body was left on the field of battle; another head was carried in triumph back to the Christian ranks.

The truce ended; the siege began—a slow and tortuous affair in which the attackers made singularly little progress. It was during this stale-mate that the indomitable Smith, following the Turks' example, suggested a third encounter to show the 'ladies of Reigall' he was not so enamoured of their servants' heads but that he would not give them another chance of taking his'.

So for the third time, before the awed gaze of two great armies, the young Lincolnshire farmer's boy rode out to defend his head against a real Turkish champion.

The engagement began with the crack of their pistols, but failing to register hits they resorted to axes. In this exciting but terrible struggle they hammered one another with blows that made them 'reel in their saddles till they had hardly sense to keep them'. One such blow from the Turkish champion sent John Smith's axe spinning from his hand. Momentarily off balance he nevertheless by brilliant horsemanship managed to elude the Turk's death-blow. For a moment all seemed lost. The Turk quickly followed up his advantage, but not quickly enough. Regaining balance, Smith drew his sword and with a lightning thrust pierced the Turk's armour. The third head rolled before the ramparts of Reigall.

A guard of honour, six thousand strong, escorted the hero to the general's tent, the heads of the three Turks being prominently displayed on the tips of lances. John Smith was rewarded with a new horse, 'richly furnished' and a scimitar and belt, and when Prince Sigismund Bathori arrived he bestowed on him a coat-of-arms engraved with three Turkish heads, and for his valour in the wars, a pension of three hundred ducats.

Soon afterwards Reigall was stormed and captured.

The climax of the war and the climax of John Smith's career as a soldier of fortune was reached with the historic battle of Rothenthurm which took place in the spring of 1602. The events leading up to it may be briefly sketched.

Wallachia was ruled by Prince Jeremy, a puppet of the Turks. Against him the Hungarian Emperor now sent an army under Prince Rodol, the previous governor of the province and from whom Jeremy had seized power. Jeremy's army, in the expectation of assistance from a force of thirty thousand Krim-Tartars, remained firmly entrenched behind powerful fortifications. But after some successful feints, Rodol enticed the Turkish army to come out and fight. Rodol was victorious; Jeremy fled. Rodol was no sooner re-installed as ruler of the province than there was news of the advance of the Krim-Tartar army. Meldri, with John Smith among his officers, was sent out at the head of a small force, some eleven thousand strong, to engage and defeat it.

Meanwhile Jeremy had gathered together another army. A few miles from Rothenthurm, Meldri suddenly found himself trapped between two Turkish armies, one of which had cut off his retreat through the Transylvanian Alps. He had no choice but to turn and fight the Krim-Tartars, who outnumbered him by three to one.

Soon the Krim-Tartars were surging forward and the Battle of Rothenthurm was joined. Meldri's gallant little army, whose only hope of survival was to cut through the advancing columns, was all but massacred. Among the thirty thousand slain or wounded on that day, who lay 'headless, armless and legless, all cut and mangled', was John Smith. He was found, still breathing, by those who had come to plunder the fallen, and judging him by his armour a man of some standing and worth a ransom, they took him prisoner.

He recovered his health but he did not win his freedom.

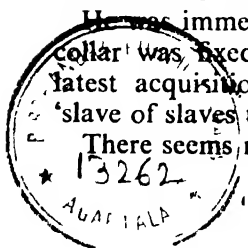
He was sold into slavery. He was nothing now but a human beast in a market-place. His fate was no one's interest or concern. He was looked at, sometimes prod-
ded, by Eastern merchants; his wounds were examined; he was even made to wrestle with other slaves to prove his strength. He was eventually bought by a Turkish pasha and sent to Constantinople to amuse the pasha's 'faire mistress'. He marched there, chained by the neck to a thousand other slaves.

John Smith remained a bachelor all his life but to women he owed a special debt of gratitude. For there were moments in his life when courage and ingenuity were not enough; moments when the love or compassion of women alone saved him. This was perhaps one such moment. He was a handsome man with a strong personality and dashing moustache, and Charatza Tragabizanda to whom he was now brought found in her slave an object of curiosity that soon developed into passion. To what extent her love was reciprocated, it is difficult to say, but we know that the poor girl, fearing that her mother was going to sell him, spirited him away to her brother in the Crimea, instructing him to look after him carefully and eventually return him to her. It is clear, however, that the admiration for John Smith that she portrayed in her letter, only roused her brother's jealousy.

After a long and painful journey to the Crimea, he reached Nalbrits, and was taken to 'a great vast stonie castle with many great courts about it, invironed with high stone walls'. Timor, the girl's brother, wasted no time in making it known to his new slave that he was to receive no favours.

He was immediately stripped and shaven and an iron collar was fixed round his neck. And, as the tyrant's latest acquisition he became—as he recalls bitterly—'slave of slaves to them all'.

There seems no reason why his story should not have



ended here: a helpless captive in the hands of a merciless tyrant. For this was the fate of thousands of Christian slaves: to toil, to live like dogs and die, friendless and forgotten in a distant land.

To the south and west was the sea, to the north the vast-stretching Russian steppes and to the east the entire continent of Asia. Furthermore, if he did escape, and there's little doubt he thought of nothing else, there was always that tell-tale iron collar riveted about his neck proclaiming him a Christian slave.

Meanwhile he was fed on the entrails of horses boiled up with corn, and worked as a labourer in the fields where Timor would come on tours of inspection and flog him on any pretext with his whip.

It was an occasion like this that set John Smith's tempestuous life once more in motion. He was alone in a barn threshing corn when Timor came up on horseback, and having dismounted, found some cause to beat him. John Smith was using a threshing club. In a moment of blind fury he turned upon his master and struck him one terrible blow on the head.

Having beaten out his tormentor's brains he put on his clothes, dragged the dead body under some hay, and after filling his knapsack with corn, mounted Timor's horse and fled into the wilderness.

He had escaped. At first this was enough, but as day after day the desolation stretched all about him, he knew that soon he would either starve or have to give himself up, although in all the wastes he travelled he had met no one. For the first and perhaps the only time in his life John Smith was on the brink of despair. It was not courage or ingenuity or even the timely intervention of a woman that saved him now. It was pure chance. Wandering blindly, he stumbled upon a great highway, the Silk Road between East and West. He followed it till he came to a signpost; with the sun pointing to China and

the East, a half moon to the lands of the Tartars, a black man full of white spots to Persia and a cross to Muscovy. John Smith followed the sign of the cross.

Travelling westwards, he came to an isolated town with a Russian garrison. Here he was freed of his iron collar and fed and clothed. The ordeal was over. From now on he moved from garrison to garrison across Russia and Poland until in the autumn of 1603 he reached Transylvania where he was overjoyed to meet many of his old friends. In Leipzig he even met the Earl of Meldri, his old commander, and Prince Sigismund, whose hospitality proved positively Arabian. Both of course had believed him dead.

John Smith, however, was very much alive, bursting with that vitality and curiosity that made him, of all the Elizabethans, the embodiment of the spirit of his age.

With money and good health, the harrowing experiences of the previous year already forgotten, the incomparable adventurer began an extensive tour of Spain, and thus 'satisfied with Europe and Asia', as he so splendidly remarked, he left Gibraltar for the Barbary coast.

Somehow, the wars in North Africa did not appeal to his imagination. He found the Moors treacherous and dishonourable. The crusading spirit was notably absent; their pettiness he rightly deemed unworthy of him. Instead he traversed the length of Morocco, from Tangier to Port Safi, as a respectable tourist. The mood did not last. At Port Safi, he fell in with a French captain who invited him on board and suggested that together they should try their luck at sea. John Smith, as we have seen, was not in these days above a little privateering. The plan did not materialise. In Safi was a British man-of-war under Captain Merham. Captain Merham invited John Smith and the Frenchman on board. Perhaps it was a kind of farewell party; toasts were doubtless drunk

to the success of the little expedition. Whatever sort of party it was it went on for a very long time. By the end of it Captain Merham's guests were in no fit state to return to the Frenchman's ship. The revellers awoke in the morning to find that a storm had blown them out to sea, and the ship went 'spooning before the wind' towards the Canary Islands.

The result of all this was that John Smith found himself privateering in a British ship instead of a French one, and engaged in sea-battles that otherwise he would have missed. They had captured three vessels, one laden with wine, and were heading back for the African coast, hoping to avoid five Dutch men-of-war lurking about in the area, when they sighted two more ships, which might profitably be plundered.

These two vessels showed no inclination to fight or to flee. They in fact invited Merham to board them, for they were apparently local craft, carrying nothing of value. Merham grew suspicious, but it was too late when he discovered that what they were carrying was all the fire-power of Spanish men-of-war. The British ship, outnumbered and outgunned, crowded on sail, but the Spaniards bore down on her, each giving her a powerful broadside. They closed in, and with the sunlight obscured in smoke and flame, they succeeded in boarding her, only to be repulsed with casualties a few minutes later. For another hour the Spanish ships raked the British man-of-war with a terrible fire, and then, having, so they imagined, softened her up, came in for the kill. The leading Spaniard flung four grapnels on to Merham's decks locking the two ships together. Then shearing off, she hoped to tear away the grating. But so hotly was she received with cross-bar shot that she found herself holed at the bow. For a moment, as she struggled to slip her grapnels, it looked as if the two ships might founder together. Breaking loose, she retired to repair

her leak while her companion poured shot into the British vessel to prevent her escaping.

For six hours the battle raged, and then under cover of darkness Merham made a dash for the coast. He failed to make any appreciable headway. At dawn the Spanish ships closed in again. After an hour or two of murderous fire the British ship was in a bad way, and she was called upon to surrender. John Smith, as we know, was not a man to give in; nor evidently was Captain Merham. For answer he sent over a volley from his quarter pieces that brought the enraged Spaniards crashing alongside. The enemy swarmed on to her decks and leapt into her rigging. As the fighting raged across the ship, in the forecastle and round the cabin, the British crew were desperately having to put out the flames that were wreathing the whole ship in a black pall.

An explosion aft conveniently blew up a number of the Spanish fighters. Then, seeing that the fire was coming under control, and his own casualties had mounted to something like a hundred, and that he still did not have possession of the ship, the Spanish captain hung out a flag of truce. Merham, however, chose to fight on. This they did for the whole of that day. It was not until the second night, that the Spanish ships broke off the engagement and disappeared in the darkness.

Merham limped back to Safi. Forty-three of his men were dead or wounded. John Smith had once again survived. He now returned to England. All that he had experienced of men and guns, of tactics and resolution, patience and decisiveness, was to reveal itself in a new and prolonged adventure—the adventure of creating the first of those United States of America.

Virginia was not, as is generally supposed, founded by Sir Walter Raleigh. It is true he twice planted a colony of Englishmen there, but the first was massacred by Indians, the second disappeared, having probably suffered

the same fate. There were of course during the days of Queen Elizabeth many attempts to colonise the New World. But the drudgery, the building of homes, the planting of corn—that such projects involved—did not ultimately appeal to men whose prime motives for such expeditions were adventure and the finding of gold.

The famous charter James I issued under which the colony was founded, the corporation in London that was to control its affairs, all rather smacks of the history books. The early history of Virginia, however, is an enthralling story in which the rise to power of Captain John Smith, and his adventures, no longer recklessly sought after but brought about by the necessities of policy, provide the major and most compelling theme of the drama.

Early in 1607—thirteen years before the 'Pilgrim Fathers' sailed—the expedition left London. Of its one hundred and fifty members, seven were to be key men. These belonged to the council, of which Edward Wingfield, a Catholic, was to become president, and John Smith a junior member. Other members who were to play important roles in the drama were Kendall, Ratcliffe, Archer and Captain Newport, officer in charge of the three ships.

John Smith's fiery personality was evidently soon asserting itself. The first time his name is mentioned in contemporary records, we learn that the expedition had just reached the West Indies, and that he had already been clamped in irons—on a charge of mutineering. A pair of gallows were built, and for a time he was in danger of being hanged. He arrived in Virginia in chains.

The three ships entered the mouth of Chesapeake Bay at the end of April. A party was sent ashore to reconnoitre. On their return they were attacked by Indians. Captain Archer was hoisted aboard with an arrow wound. It was a sobering start to the project.

The same evening Captain Newport opened the sealed orders from London, and the names of the councilmen were made known for the first time. These included Wingfield, who was elected President, Newport, Gosnold, the explorer, Martin, Ratcliffe, Kendall—and John Smith. John Smith, however, was not admitted to the council, and remained a prisoner until the expedition had gone some fifty miles up the James River, where, after some differences of opinion, a site was chosen for their settlement and appropriately named Jamestown.

While buildings were being erected and defences set up on the new site, a small party, led by the Honourable George Percy and including Smith, went off with an Indian guide to explore the river, confidently expecting to come out somewhere on the Pacific coast. In this they were disappointed. The Indians they met were inclined to be suspicious and even belligerent, but the magic of the expedition's fire-arms, if it didn't entirely allay their suspicions, at least taught them to appear more friendly. There were feasts and dancing and the tracing of primitive maps in the sand. There was also the sight of a white Indian boy, a pathetic reminder of Raleigh's ill-starred efforts at colonisation some twenty years before.

Some fifty miles on they reached the village of Powhatan, not far from where Richmond now stands. Here was one of the seats of the great Indian chief, Powhatan, who held sovereign sway over all the chiefs and tribes along the James and York rivers. King Powhatan received Captain Newport and the expedition. An alliance of friendship was made; gifts were exchanged; festivities held, during which the Englishmen, discovering a certain light-fingeredness among their hosts, kept a sharp eye on their weapons.

They explored further up the river. They were entertained by an Indian Queen, 'a fat, lusty, manly woman', and were sent gifts by the King of Pamunkey, who, with

his one hundred and ten-year-old adviser, was later to prove the colony's deadliest enemy.

When John Smith and the exploration party reached Jamestown, they found it in a state of considerable excitement. The all-too-trusting Wingfield had not only been slack about the fort's defences—none of the tall grass immediately outside it had been cut down—he had also omitted to organise guards, believing implicitly in the Indians' good faith. The result was that two hundred of them suddenly attacked the colony, intending to wipe it out. Wingfield himself had an arrow through his beard, several men were killed or wounded and the others were saved by the ships, moored close to the shore, firing their ordnance.

Two men were dead; but before that fateful year was out a hundred more (or two-thirds of the whole gallant colony) were to join them.

A palisade was promptly put up, and the tall grass cut down. Those who wandered outside the reassuring fence did so at their own peril. Eustace Clovell did. He came back with six arrows in his body. He died soon afterwards.

The attack on the colony, the dangers to which it had been exposed, caused its members to look critically at their leaders. Many wanted to see John Smith among the councillors. The circumstances that had brought about his temporary captivity and had almost led to his being hanged were thus investigated. Witnesses came forward. John Smith's plot to murder the president and take over the colony was proved to be utterly without foundation. His name was cleared and at last he took his rightful place on the council.

It was June. Captain Newport, in whom John Smith had complete confidence, set sail for England, hoping to return with supplies of food in about twenty weeks' time. His cargo of sassafras and cedarwood—the best

the colonials had been able to do—was, of course, hardly likely to please the London council.

Meanwhile, the men in Virginia, with food supplies for only fifteen weeks and bereft of that seemingly inexhaustible reserve of ship's biscuits, were put on short rations: a half a pint of wheat and the same quantity of barley boiled in water was their food for the day. In the burning heat of summer, exhausted by the strenuous work of building, for which most of them were so utterly unsuited, and unable, partly because of the Indians and partly through lack of skill, to shoot the game in the forests, the settlers began to lose heart. Then came typhoid and malaria. Within three months half the population had perished. Frantically the living tried to bury the dead; but the bodies piled up more quickly than graves could be dug. Over the whole heat-laden compound hung the sweet and sickly smell of putrefaction.

During this terrible time Wingfield proved a poor leader, and rightly or wrongly was accused of appropriating more than his share of the precious stocks of food and drink. As a Roman Catholic he was further suspected of Spanish sympathies, Spain still being regarded by adventurers in the New World as an ogre. So Wingfield was deposed, and Ratcliffe appointed in his place.

But it was to John Smith that men were turning for salvation. It was he who brought discipline and efficiency to the rapidly disintegrating colony. 'He set some to mow, others to bind, some to build houses, others to thatch them, himself always bearing the greatest task, so that in a short time he provided most of the lodgings, neglecting any for himself.'

He also made constant journeys among the Indians, always bargaining for corn to take back to his starving settlers.

Returning unexpectedly early from one of these trips

he was just in time to stop Wingfield and Captain Kendall from making off in the pinnace. They had between them won over most of the crew and were all set to sail. But John Smith, never at a loss in a crisis, trained the guns of the fort on the ship and warned the deserters to 'stay or sink'. The plot to desert seems to have been part of a larger plot, the details of which have remained obscure. It is possible that Kendall *was* in touch with the Spanish government, as Wingfield was suspected of being. At any rate Kendall, the ex-president's friend, and a member of the council, was summarily shot.

John Smith, now second in power only to President Ratcliffe, chose this time to set out on an expedition with eight followers to explore the Chickahominy river, a tributary of the James. It was to be a memorable journey.

For the first forty miles they sailed in the shallop, but the river began to narrow, and fallen logs and spreading trees impeded them. John Smith at length decided to paddle on in canoes with a party of four, leaving the rest behind, and with strict orders not to leave the boat. He had not gone long before they disobeyed these orders and went ashore. One of them, George Casson, was promptly seized by Indians. They wanted to know where John Smith had gone. When Casson, to the best of his ability, told them, they murdered him. The rest, escaping to the boat, hurried back to Jamestown.

Unaware of the hostile mood of the savages, John Smith paddled on until the river was hardly more than a stream, choked with vegetation. Once again he split the party, leaving the two Englishmen, Robinson and Emry, in charge of the canoes, while he himself and one Indian guide struck off in quest of game. At any sign of danger the two separate parties would fire their guns.

They had penetrated some distance into the woods when they heard the Indians' war-cry. There had been no warning sound of musket-fire, so that John Smith

believed that Robinson's party had been surprised and captured. And if, as he imagined, they had been betrayed by their own Indian guides, he himself was going to take no chances. It ultimately transpired that the Indian guides had not betrayed them, that the meeting was pure chance. However, John Smith, as the arrows sped towards him, bound his guide's wrist to him, and holding a pistol in his free hand, stood his ground.

Arrows fell thick and fast. One embedded itself in his thigh, but using his wretched guide as a shield, and blazing away with his pistol he advanced towards his assailants. Then he found himself surrounded by some two hundred Indians. At this moment the chief of Pamunkey appeared (without his one hundred and ten-year-old adviser), and the Indians downed their weapons.

Smith's versatile guide now acted as his interpreter. Robinson, he learnt, had already been murdered; and he himself was ordered to throw away his weapons. Refusing to be intimidated and holding his pistol high, he retreated towards the river. The Indians had the greatest respect for this magic weapon, and it seemed for a moment that he would successfully make his escape. But at the river's edge he got caught in a quagmire, and his guide, trying to rescue him, did the same. John Smith threw away his weapons and the Indians rushed forward and dragged him safely from the mire, and from there triumphantly before their chief.

In all probability this would be the end. It was essential, therefore, to divert the angry chief's thoughts away from another murder. From his pocket he produced a compass and began to play with it. He showed it to the chief. It was curious how the little needle always pointed north. It was altogether curious about the earth, that it wasn't flat at all but round and hurtled through space, round and round the sun. . . . The fascinated chief settled down, and together they discussed the universe.

Never had John Smith's ingenious mind worked faster or to better effect.

His arrow wound seems to have been superficial, nothing that a little ointment could not put right, but to the Indians and their chief he appeared not only to be immune from their weapons, but a master of magic. In consequence, they could not bear to let him go. Instead, they took him on a journey among all the other river tribes, boasting of their capture, exulting in their newly-acquired prestige. For the prisoner it was an anxious time; for he had no idea what his ultimate fate was to be; the role of magician, as the days went by, sorely taxed his ingenuity.

At last, after an extensive tour the chief (his name, incidentally, was Opechancanough!) led him to the royal presence of King Powhatan, who, it was rumoured, was laying plans to destroy Jamestown completely. Now suddenly its most formidable colonist had fallen into his hands. It was too good a chance to throw away.

As was their macabre custom, they washed the prisoner and feasted him royally. He was then seized. Two great stones were rolled before the royal presence. To these John Smith was dragged, his head forced down, while other Indians stood over him waiting for their chief's orders to beat out his brains with their clubs.

This was the famous moment, when 'Pocahontas, the King's dearest daughter, whom no entreaty could prevail, got his head in her arms, and laid her own upon his to save him from death'. This dramatic and emotional scene proved even too much for the Royal Savage. John Smith's life was spared yet again. He would live from now on as a member of the royal household, and make hatchets and bells, beads and copper for its royal members.

This extraordinary role of carpenter and coppersmith

did not, needless to say, last for long. A few days later, when Smith was alone in his tent, the great Powhatan visited him, and had evidently, during those few days, undergone a change of heart. For now he proclaimed John Smith as his own son, to be named Nantaquond. In return for this honour Powhatan asked for 'two great guns' which he was to fetch from Jamestown. It was all very bewildering.

John Smith, accordingly, and hardly believing in his good fortune, returned to Jamestown with twelve guides. The 'two great guns' were duly presented, but being far too heavy to carry, the Indians refused them, only asking that they should be fired. This was done. The Indians, satisfied, returned, laden with gifts that the honest Smith insisted should be given to their King. So ended a remarkable episode.

John Smith reached Jamestown on January 8th. On the 9th he was sentenced to be hanged for the deaths of Robinson and Emry.

This incredible state of affairs needs a little explanation. John Smith had been away for some weeks. The winter had been the severest ever known in Virginia. The snow and ice and bitter sweeping winds, and the lack of adequate shelter and warmth, had led some of the colonists to consider leaving for England. Ratcliffe, the President, and Archer, a member of the council, had championed this idea, and only the ice had stopped them from making a getaway. With the return of John Smith, they knew well their chances of desertion were seriously lessened. They therefore had him arrested and brought to trial.

If John Smith could be disposed of, the way would be clear for a general exodus, and the abandonment of the whole dispiriting project. Wingfield, who was a prisoner on board ship and expected to suffer Kendall's fate, claims that Smith's life and probably his own were only

saved by the arrival on that day of Captain Newport with the first supply from England.

John Smith, because of his popularity among the Indians, continued to be hated by his fellow-countrymen. This hatred was further aggravated by the fact that twice a week, in a procession led by the faithful little Pocahontas, supplies of corn arrived from Powhatan to his adopted son.

Smith's enemies, namely Ratcliffe and Archer, immediately proceeded, now that there was food in abundance, to try to curry favour with the Indians by bartering valuables for the smallest possible return, with the result that it soon got back to Powhatan that John Smith was extremely ungenerous in his dealings. It was a mean, selfish trick played by mean and petty men. It was a pity, too, that the great Captain Newport himself, whom Smith had built up in the minds of the Indians into a kind of God, should have done the same thing. His motives, it is true, were different, but were nonetheless misguided.

The meeting between Newport and Powhatan was a grand occasion. But when the two men got down to business, John Smith was irritated by Powhatan's greed and Newport's misplaced generosity. It was all right for Newport—a mere visitor—to be generous, but it was a little hard on those who were left behind, whose very survival depended on driving hard bargains.

Smith, however, in his inimitable way, had the last word. For he dangled some blue beads in front of the eyes of his adopted father, and so praised their beauty and seemed so reluctant to let them go, that he obtained nearly four hundred bushels of corn before he could be 'induced' to part with them. Smith repeated the performance when he took Newport to meet Opechancanough.

The new contingent that Newport had brought with him from England appear to have been a pretty rough lot. They seem to have been the cause of a fire in the town

which almost destroyed it and led to a number of deaths; they were also responsible for the sudden mad rush to find gold. In this they had of course been encouraged by the London Council.

The mica dust that flashed like gold on the beds of the Virginian streams was assiduously dug up and vast quantities were shipped to England. From this feverish toil, John Smith alone seems to have stood back contemptuously, convinced that the stuff was worthless. And so it proved, much to the fury of the avaricious councillors in London.

Captain Newport sailed away, taking with him the deposed Wingfield and that trouble-maker, Archer. The best of the new men was Master Scrivener. Being both efficient and hard-working, he inevitably found in John Smith a kindred spirit, and under their leadership, the town was gradually restored from the ravages of fire.

Meanwhile the supply ship that had set out with Newport but had got driven off course by storms had arrived safely. Quashing a plan to load it up with more mica dust, John Smith organised parties to fell trees, so that *The Phoenix* returned with a solid cargo of cedarwood.

Leaving the reliable Scrivener to keep an eye on the settlement, John Smith left in the Colony's barge on a voyage along the coast. During this long and tiring expedition Smith compiled his first map of Virginia and the Atlantic coast. Headlands were named in honour of Prince Charles, the future king who was to die on the scaffold, in honour of Smith's old friend, the Earl of Plover, and in memory of various members of the expedition.

Storms at sea terrified the crew, and after a fortnight of rowing and sailing, they implored John Smith to turn back, always fearing the 'unmerciful raging of that ocean-like water'. The decision, to go on or to go back, was made however by the physician, Dr. Russell.

They were all spearing fish at the mouth of the Rappahannock river, when their captain, enormously enjoying the sport, speared something flat and huge with his sword. He hauled it on board and was struck by it on the wrist. The fish was a sting ray. No blood flowed from the wound, but soon his arm and shoulder began to swell. This swelling was accompanied by intense pain. For a while John Smith was so ill that they rowed to a nearby island and began to dig his grave. But the 'precious oil' that Dr. Russell had used slowly began to take effect; the grave-digging was abandoned; and the wretched seasick crew thankfully headed south.

John Smith returned to yet another crisis in Jamestown. The behaviour of Ratcliffe, the President, had inflamed the settlers to a state of mutiny. The settlers themselves were already in a bad way. Fever had struck at more than half of them, and at many fatally. Much of the food supply, the corn in particular, had gone mouldy with the damp; and the rats, that had come off the ships, had fouled the rest. Ratcliffe did little to try to alleviate their sufferings and a good deal to increase them. He had lived more sumptuously than the slender supplies justified; he had squandered much that was valuable on the Indians in order to spite Smith; he had ordered a rather grandiose house to be built for him in the woods when materials were short and labour was short, and both were needed for more urgent uses. Scrivener had gone down with fever, so that there was nobody to curb Ratcliffe's designs.

When John Smith returned, the settlers with one voice demanded that Ratcliffe be deposed. This was done.

Then letters-patent arrived constituting John Smith President. The man who had landed in Virginia a prisoner in chains had at last reached the top. Peace and efficiency followed. The settlement was re-organised; homes constructed; a small army, trained by the President himself,

came into being; the whole place was now properly protected. Then Captain Newport arrived with the second supply and special orders from London. To the intelligent and far-sighted President these orders seemed ridiculous: they were that Newport should remain in Virginia until gold was found or a passage into the 'South Sea'. An expedition that John Smith had organised to find the essential food was now postponed, while another was organised to find this impossible outlet to the sea.

John Smith argued that food supplies counted above all else. On the steady influx of corn depended their survival. He also explained that with each shipment from England, the colony's relationship with Powhatan worsened—inevitably, for the Indian chief, for all his outward show of goodwill, began to see the White man as a permanent ugly menace to his civilisation.

According to Newport, the London Council knew all about that, and had thought up a plan that would secure his everlasting loyalty: he was to be solemnly crowned King and be presented at 'the coronation' with (of all things!) a proper bed, a wash-basin and pitcher, and of course robes suitable to the occasion.

The ceremony was to take place at Jamestown.

Powhatan received the news with frigid dignity. For if his ideas about coronations were vague, they were crystal-clear on matters of self-importance. In short, the ceremony would take place at Werowocomoco or not at all. The ceremony took place at Werowocomoco. The bedroom furniture was duly despatched up the river on a journey of a hundred miles, while Captain Newport with an impressive guard of honour cut across overland, a mere twenty miles, arriving at the landing stage in time to see the royal presents unloaded. Powhatan was there too, eyeing his presents with some concern. But the presents, not being of gold, and not, to his untutored eye, being in fact of any foreseeable value at all, the Indian

chief faced the rest of the ceremony with sour reluctance.

He could not understand why they were all trying to dress him up in curious garments in which his arms and legs got thoroughly entangled. He refused the scarlet cloak altogether. Nor could he understand why he should be expected to kneel down to receive the thing they called a 'crown'. It was all too undignified. However, strong men pressed on his head and shoulders, and thus assaulted, his legs seem for a moment to have given way, and the crown was hastily planted upon his head. At the same time a volley of fire from the fifty guards resounded triumphantly through the camp. To his already frayed nerves, this was too much. Powhatan leapt up in terror, believing he was about to be murdered, and on this suspicious note the ceremony ended—or nearly ended. For Powhatan, quickly realising his mistake, regained his dignity, and grandly presented Captain Newport with his old shoes.

As John Smith had foreseen, the coronation failed to consolidate the friendship between Britain and the Indians. It heightened in Powhatan's mind the sense of the power and mystery of the White invaders. It deepened his resolve to be rid of them. The best way to do this was to starve them out by withholding the corn supplies—and if possible destroy their seemingly indestructible leader, who alone held the colony together.

Food supplies and a plan to build Powhatan a house (which Powhatan would pay for in corn) once again took John Smith and eighteen men to Werowocomoco. Here some more hard bargains were driven, and a lot of insincere feasting went on. In the dead of night, John Smith was woken up by the faithful little princess, Pocahontas, who had come stealing through the lonely woods to tell him that her father was arranging to have him killed.

One would like to be able to record in the life of this

stern hero some evidence of real affection for the little girl who twice saved him from almost certain death. Perhaps there were moments of tenderness; there must, indeed, have been something to inspire her love for him. But the fact remains that John Smith never married; and Pocahontas married another Englishman and came all the way to England, only to die on the journey back.

John Smith stayed awake all that night with his pistol ready. When the assassins stole upon him, they found him waiting for them, and they smiled, pretending to have come merely to ensure that he was comfortable.

Thwarted in his plans, Powhatan kept up the farce of hospitality, and John Smith departed on the following day without being molested. That Powhatan sent word to Opechancanough ordering him to do what he himself had tried and failed to do is quite possible. What is quite certain is that in the hands of the chief of Pamunkey, John Smith escaped death only by one of those characteristic displays of resolute action that time and again dumbfounded his enemies.

Opechancanough explained that he had little corn to spare, and what he had he offered Smith on terms designed to provoke the Englishman. Incensed by the Indian chief's refusal to trade reasonably, John Smith challenged him to a wrestling match: the winner would get the corn and an equivalent quantity of copper. The offer was turned down. The Indian chief had no need to fight Smith who was now at his mercy. For at that moment Dr. Russell burst in to warn him that they were surrounded by some two hundred savages, their arrows poised ready to shoot.

It all happened in a flash. Before the savages could shoot, before he could issue any orders, Opechancanough found himself seized by the hair and with the muzzle of a pistol pressed against his ear. In this way, and to his utter confusion, he was dragged in front of his own

armed warriors by the 'miracle' man: they were awed not only by his reputation, but by his temerity in treating their chief with such unbelievable contempt. 'If I be the mark you aim at,' he roared, 'shoot he that dare. You promised to freight my ship ere I departed, and so you shall; or I mean to load her with your dead carcasses. Yet if as friends you will come and trade, I once more promise not to trouble you except you give me the first occasion, and your king shall be free and be my friend, for I have not come to hurt him or any of you.'

The Indians knew John Smith was a man who kept his word. They downed their arms; their king was set free. But his humiliation burned inside him. In the night the house Smith was sleeping in was stormed. He awoke, dazed with sleep, and seized his sword and pistol, and with those that were with him drove the Indians away. In the morning the shame-faced chief of Pamunkey hurriedly apologised for such an unfortunate incident.

During his absence, Jamestown was again invaded by a plague of rats. Food became short, and certain traitorous members of the colony found a profitable means of livelihood in trading arms for food. The recipient of most of these arms was the chief of Paspahegh, who, doubtless following Powhatan's instructions, harried the settlers whenever an opportunity presented itself.

John Smith's fresh supply of corn did much to ease the food situation, and he at once took vigorous steps to stop the arms traffic—a practice he viewed with the gravest concern. A few days later in fact while he was in the woods he was warned of an ambush. In his efforts to avoid it he came by chance on the chief of Paspahegh himself. There began a friendly conversation, and then the chief, seeing the captain was carrying only a sword, suddenly shot at him with a stolen pistol. John Smith closed in upon him; a terrible hand-to-hand struggle ensued. Neither was given a chance to use his weapon,

but locked together, they fought in silence, rolling on the ground in a prolonged and fearful embrace. The Indian was a stronger man but he was also an older one. Somehow he managed to roll the Englishman into the river, hoping to drown him, but Smith, twisting out of his grip as their bodies lashed about in the water, found the Indian's throat, and began to strangle him. At the last moment, he released his grip and then took the man prisoner, intending to use him as a hostage.

A careless guard, however, allowed him to escape. It was not until Smith went out in person at the head of a punitive force that Paspashegh and his warriors were routed and finally tamed.

It was July 1609. John Smith's powers were at their zenith. The Indians respected him and feared him, yet trusted him, as did his own settlers. Through him food supplies were maintained, adequate homes provided, and the town's defence was properly manned by soldiers that he himself had trained. Virginia was rising up from sure foundations.

Then one day he was in a boat on the river. A bag of gunpowder exploded. The explosion ripped the flesh from his thighs and set fire to his clothes. Stunned by the blast, and horribly burnt, he had, nevertheless, the presence of mind to roll overboard. The flames on his body were extinguished but he was too maimed to swim. The rest of the crew recovering from the shock were just in time to haul him out of the water before he drowned.

John Smith recovered sufficiently to sail home in October 1609. He never returned. One of the settlers wrote: 'Thus we lost him, that in all his proceedings made justice his first guide, and experience his second, ever hating baseness, sloth, pride and indignity more than any dangers. . . .'

Virginia reverted to chaos. Among those who were

killed in the frequent skirmishes was the worthless Ratcliffe.

Law and order was finally restored—for a while—under the strong rule of Lord de la Warr and Sir Thomas Gates. The colony expanded up and down the river. Tobacco was planted and flourished. But later, defences against the Indians were allowed to fall into decay; the two races mingled with every appearance of goodwill. The Indians were sold arms and even trained to use them. Back in England John Smith warned the Council that the Indians were not to be trusted.

As usual he was right. Patiently and secretly Opechan-canough had been planning his revenge on the colony. The massacre of Jamestown in 1622 with its terrible casualties came as a shock to all but the farseeing Smith. When he came forward offering his services to re-organise the town's defences, he was spitefully turned down.

Meanwhile there had been the dramatic appearance in fashionable London of the little princess, Pocahontas; a brief meeting between her and her erstwhile hero, before he set off on a fishing expedition to Newfoundland and New England.

John Smith's hurricane life of adventure was almost, but not quite spent. In the year 1615, he sailed a second time for New England. He did not reach it. His small barque, after escaping from two French men-of-war, was pursued by a fleet of four. The master of the barque yielded before such overwhelming strength. The French Admiral, thereupon commandeered the two English ships, that comprised the expedition, manned them with his own crews, distributing the English sailors evenly among his own fleet.

Eventually John Smith prevailed upon the French Admiral to allow him and his crew to return to their ships. This accomplished, it was most unfortunate that Smith should have been with the French Admiral when

a small treasure-ship hove in sight. The English crew, not wishing to continue across the Atlantic, and being momentarily without their captain, broke away, leaving Smith aboard the French man-of-war and without a ship and with all his possessions lost.

It was a curious and frustrating situation: he had become overnight a kind of reluctant buccaneer, fighting for the French Admiral against any ships that were not English and finding himself under lock and key at the first sight of an English flag.

For months they sailed around the Azores and deeper into the Atlantic, engaging Spaniards and Dutchmen and Englishmen in encounter after encounter, with John Smith alternately fighting on the decks or brooding in his cabin.

But when they at last anchored off the Ile de Ré, near the port of La Rochelle, instead of being set free, he was made a political prisoner.

It was November. An Atlantic gale sprang up, ultimately wrecking half the French fleet. Under cover, as it were, of wind and driving rain, John Smith with tremendous courage managed to slip into the ship's boat and cast off. A desperate time followed. At the mercy of wind and current he clung to the frail craft, and was washed up on the shore of a small island where he was discovered, half dead with cold and hunger, by some fishermen. He gave them the stolen boat in exchange for a safe journey to La Rochelle. Here another woman befriended him. He met Madame Chanoyer whose kindness quickly restored him to health.

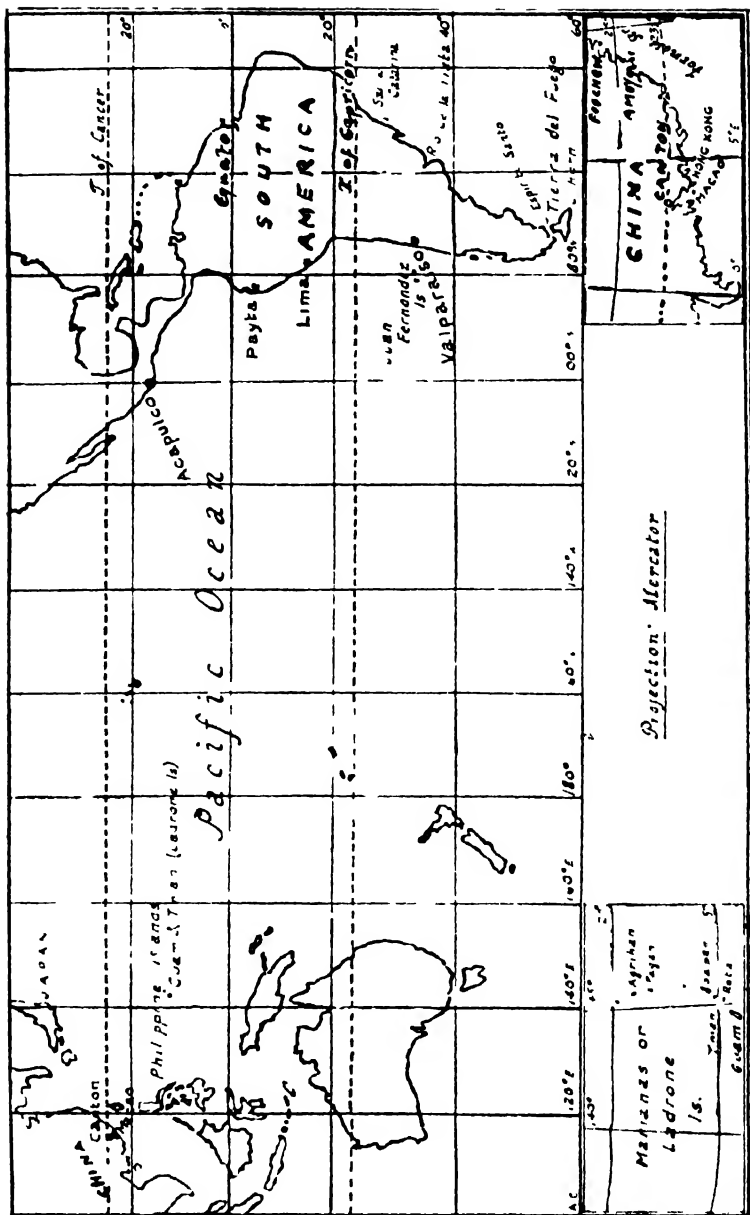
In England he had been reported dead. But he was very much alive, and had the satisfaction of bringing to justice many of the English crew who had deserted him on his journey to America.

It was the year 1615. John Smith was only thirty-five. But this would seem the moment to leave him: returning

triumphantly from battles at sea; from lonely struggles in an open boat; from captivity; from the whip-lash of icy winds on a desolate island. He was to live another sixteen years during which he tirelessly encouraged the idea of colonisation, and wrote of his adventures and of the fruits of his experience.

He was a man, who, for all his incredible achievements, was never fully appreciated in his time, nor fully honoured. He was a man greater in every way than his superiors, and his superiors, conscious of this, did all they could to discredit him.

It was left to posterity to sift the truth from all the lies; and posterity decreed that he must take his place among the greatest of the Elizabethans.



II

GEORGE ANSON

(1697-1762)

EVERY year, across the Pacific Ocean, between Manila and Mexico, a Spanish galleon sailed, and every year she was laden with a cargo as rich as any then known to man: it consisted of gold and silver to the value of half a million pounds.

This fabulous treasure-ship was invariably the fastest and strongest vessel the Spaniards possessed. She sailed alone, relying on her speed and powerful armament to protect her from those who might attempt to molest her. There were two very good reasons, however, why none did molest her. First, an attack on such a ship by a foreign power would almost certainly have led to war; secondly, foreign warships rarely tried to round the Horn and reach the Pacific Ocean. The journey was costly and exceedingly dangerous.

Drake had done so a hundred and fifty years before, but since then, the English flag had not been seen in those little known and inhospitable waters.

But in 1739, England and Spain went to war. All at once Spain's vast colonial wealth became legitimate plunder. The Spanish Government was not unaware of this; and soon a formidable fleet of Spanish warships was sailing out to defend it.

And very soon George Anson was setting out to attack. His journey was one of the most thrilling, appalling, tragic and triumphant voyages ever undertaken.

Anson did almost all his travelling as an officer of the

Royal Navy. He joined the navy in 1712 at the age of fourteen. At the age of sixty-five and a few months before his death he was made Admiral of the Fleet.

It is impossible to find criticisms of his character. He was worshipped by his men; the politicians of his time completely trusted him; he was even loved by his enemies. He was cool in a crisis and resolute in action; he was incorruptible in an age notorious for its corruption; above all, he was humane; and all these splendid qualities were never seen to better effect than during his great journey that began in the September of 1740.

Anson was forty-three at the time, and a remarkably good-looking man he was. He had a fine open face with a broad forehead and a strong, well-shaped jaw; clear blue eyes and a generous, sensitive mouth that more than anything gave to his expression an air of charm and good humour. No wonder he set the Spanish ladies' hearts aflutter when they became his prisoners! No wonder they showed no inclination to leave his ship!

Anson returned from service off the coast of North America in 1739. He was summoned to the Admiralty, where he received his orders. These were to sail round Cape Horn and into the 'South Seas' where he was to 'annoy and distress the Spaniards' to the utmost of his power. He was also 'to look out for the Acapulco ship which sails from that place to Manila'. He could then return home if he wished 'by way of China'. Anson's journey would take him round the world.

The difficulties of such a voyage in those days were monumental. There were no charts accurate enough to be of value; there were no means of measuring longitude; ships were at the mercy of winds, currents and climatic conditions; and knowledge of these, especially in the South Atlantic and 'the South Seas', was almost non-existent. For weeks a ship might be becalmed, or driven relentlessly back along its course by hurricane winds or

impotently forward towards a thunderous reef. A mariner's compass, a sextant, a log (a kind of primitive speedometer) were the sole means of navigation. It was all very vague.

The problem of food and water was equally unsatisfactory. After a few days at sea most of the livestock and fresh vegetables would have been eaten by the officers; from then on the entire crew would live almost exclusively on ship's biscuits and salt beef. The biscuits were pretty unwholesome at the best of times: they were six inches square and half an inch thick, and as hard as concrete, until eventually weevils got into them and then they crumbled away into powder. The water supply was carried in wooden barrels. It was river water: foul even when fresh, it was not long before it became virtually undrinkable so that enormous quantities of wine or beer were brought aboard, and occupied valuable store-space in ships, that, embarking on a long voyage, were already dangerously overladen.

The ships themselves were old and in some cases barely sea-worthy. Under Walpole's long rule the navy had deteriorated. It was not the quality of her ships, but the daring and tenacity of her officers and men that had enabled her still to remain a formidable power on the high seas.

Anson's Pacific Squadron, as it was called, consisted of six warships and two merchantmen. The main fighting ships were Anson's *Centurion*, the *Gloucester*, the *Severn*, the *Pearle*, the *Wager*, and the little look-out ship, the *Tryall*. Altogether on board these ships were one thousand nine hundred and thirty-nine men, of which some five hundred were 'marines'. The two small merchantmen, the *Anna* and the *Industry*, acted as store-ships.

The expedition was a long time getting organised. Volunteers for crew were not forthcoming, and those

who were press-ganged into service deserted at the first opportunity. The 'marines' were even harder to come by; for the War Office could not bear to see soldiers sailing away to the Pacific when the army was fighting in Europe. The months passed. Anson waited in vain for Colonel Bland's regiment that had been promised him. Instead five hundred Pensioners from Chelsea Hospital were sent.

These poor, wretched old men, all of whom were over sixty and had retired after long years of service, were marched all the way from London to Portsmouth. Some were dragged from their sick-beds; others were so lame they could barely walk at all. The strongest amongst them made their escape, so that it was the oldest and most infirm who ultimately found their way on to the waiting ships. Exhausted and ill, they lay miserably in their hammocks in the evil-smelling bowels of the ships, and waited to die. They did not have to wait long.

Responsibility for this dreadful business lay with the Lords Justices, who, in the absence of King George II, then away in Hanover, were the chief power in the land. Anson's angry protestations were ignored.

Meanwhile, what with desertions, sickness and War Office muddles, the expedition, as late as August, remained seriously under-manned. Eventually some two hundred recruits, quite untrained, were detailed from local regiments. With this pathetic soldiery, a mixture of raw youth and senility, Anson prepared to sail. Off the Isle of Wight, however, he was further delayed while two vast convoys assembled—one bound for North America, the other for Gibraltar. Anson was to escort them as far as the latitude of Lisbon.

On September 18th he at last set sail. Eleven days later off Lisbon, the convoys split up. Anson was now alone with his squadron, heading towards Madeira. There could be no more orders, no more counter-orders, no

more delays. After a year of maddening frustration, Anson had finally struggled free. For him it was a great moment.

The wind, however, failed him. Instead of a fortnight it took him forty days to reach Madeira.

The Portuguese were friendly neutrals, and while the ships were watered and fresh supplies were being brought aboard, Anson was rowed ashore to meet Don Joao de Lopes, the Governor. From him Anson learnt that for the past week a powerful Spanish fleet had been lurking on the horizon and that each day a sloop had come nosing inshore, looking for something. That 'something' was clearly Anson.

Although Anson was relieved at having avoided an engagement with the enemy fleet, the news disquieted him. He believed, and he was right, that the Spanish Admiral, thinking he had been given the slip, had sailed hurriedly for South America. For Anson, it was vital to reach the Pacific first, for if he was successfully 'to annoy and distress the Spaniards', he did not want the entire South Pacific coast-line with all its Spanish ports to be warned of his approach. He too, therefore, sailed post-haste for South America.

In terms of dead men that crossing marked the beginning of a terrible voyage. In the intense heat of the tropics, the wind that filled the ship's sails did not penetrate the desperately overcrowded lower decks where the men's hammocks were and where the sick lay. So much cargo was being carried that these decks were either below the waterline or too close to it for the port-holes to be opened. The ventilation being non-existent the heat there was appalling. So was the smell. Many of those on board, not being used to the sea, were terribly sea-sick; many of them were too ill or too infirm to move. They vomited where they lay. Worse than this, they could not reach the lavatories, or, as they were called, 'the

heads', which were a primitive system of planks jutting over the bows. In these nightmare conditions 90 men died and 320 were too ill to work.

Half-way across the Atlantic the two little merchantmen signalled to the *Centurion* that their contracts had expired. The captain of the *Anna* was prevailed upon to renew his, but the *Industry* had another contract to fulfil, so that her supplies had to be transferred to the other ships that in truth had no space for them.

Having unburdened her cargo and taken on the entire Squadron's mail, the *Industry* altered course and sailed for home. Unhappily she was captured by a Spanish warship, and the letters perished.

So now there were seven. Anson took drastic steps at this point to try to bring relief to the sick. He ordered the carpenters to cut as many ventilation holes in the sides of the ships as was compatible with their safety. This was a wise and humane measure, and the best he could do until, on reaching Santa Catherina off the coast of Brazil, he was able to take all the sick ashore and set them up in tents, while the ships were overhauled and cleaned with vinegar and fumigated with smoke. 'These operations,' according to one member of the expedition, 'were extremely necessary for correcting the noisome stench on board and destroying the vermin.'

Santa Catherina belonged to Portugal. It was a small and lonely outpost of empire, and its Governor had no wish to displease either of those two powerful maritime powers, England and Spain. Accordingly, he welcomed Anson and his squadron and offered them the island's very considerable facilities; at the same time he sent a fast frigate down to the River Plate to warn the Spanish Admiral, Don José Pizarro, of Anson's arrival. But the Portuguese Governor, as we shall see later, had no idea that in satisfying his conscience he was at the same time doing the English Commodore an invaluable service.

The English Commodore, for that matter, had no idea either. His sole concern was to round the Horn before the Spaniards. Repairs were pushed along as quickly as possible, and on January 18th, 1741, the squadron sailed. There could not have been a worse time of the year for attempting to round the Horn.

Five hundred miles south, at the mouth of the River Plate, Pizarro, too, was hastening repairs. Alarmed at hearing Anson was in the vicinity, and determined to beat him in the race round the Horn, he sailed before the work of overhauling his ships had been properly completed. He sailed, in fact, four days after Anson.

Immediately ahead of both fleets lay that frightful navigational hazard—Cape Horn. On board the *Centurion* Anson held a council of war. It was decided that should anything happen to the *Centurion*, the rest of the expedition should continue. It was decided that the squadron should keep close together, if possible within two miles of the *Centurion*. It was further decided that, in the event of storms, fog or an engagement with the enemy, when the squadron might be dispersed, ships thus cut off should make for Port St. Julian on the Patagonian coast. If contact was not made there with the squadron they should continue on to Socorro off Chile. The last key meeting-point was to be the Island of Juan Fernandez, not far from Valparaiso.

Juan Fernandez, incidentally, was the island from which Alexander Selkirk was rescued. His adventures became the basis of Defoe's classic, 'Robinson Crusoe'.

They had been some days at sea when they ran into a storm, and after the storm the fog settled over them, and when at last it lifted the *Tryall* was seen dragging its mainmast in the water; worse, the *Pearle* was missing altogether. The *Gloucester* took the *Tryall* in tow, while the entire squadron searched for the missing *Pearle*.

When at last she was sighted, and the English ships

approached her, Anson was mystified to see her crowding on sail. The *Pearle* had mistaken the English for Spaniards. She had cause to be nervous, for only a few days before in the fog she had done something infinitely worse: she had mistaken the Spaniards for the English. When this had been realised she fled. The Spanish ships pursued her, and she only escaped by sailing boldly through some rocky shallows close inshore, which the Spaniards would not risk negotiating. It was a narrow squeak indeed.

The *Pearle* incident gave Anson plenty to think about. He now knew for certain that the Spaniards were just ahead of him. He also knew that they knew he must be sailing for the Pacific. The opposing forces might meet at any moment. He must round the Horn first. At the same time he could not desert the *Tryall*. Fortunately the weather again deteriorated, so that as he sailed into Port St. Julian to repair the *Tryall*, he was comforted by the fact that the foul weather was giving the Spanish fleet a powerful battering and preventing it from making much headway to the south.

Anson sailed again at the end of February. Once more he urged the squadron to keep close together in case of an enemy attack. But an attack did not come from the Spanish ships. It came, with far greater power than they could ever have mustered, from Cape Horn itself.

It is not easy to convey the full horrors of that epic struggle with the Horn. From a map, it all looked so simple. In terms of nautical miles there was so little to it. And yet it was not until May—after four terrible months—that the *Centurion* emerged from the struggle. And when she did she found herself alone.

As the squadron, back in February, had come out from the lee of Tierra del Fuego, the southernmost part of South America, each ship received the full, demoniac impact of the hurricane westerly winds. The nightmare

had begun. Mountainous waves hurled them towards the rocky coast; sails were split; yards, spars and rigging torn away, as water deluged over the decks. Snowstorms raged about them; what was left of the sails froze hard; fingers became frost-bitten. The ships were alternately frozen and flooded; no fires could be lit, no lights could burn. Men were washed overboard; there were men with broken legs and broken necks.

In the bitter cold, sodden darkness below, other men were dying of scurvy. Anson wrote: 'I have not men able to keep the decks or sufficient to take in a topsail, and every day six or eight men are buried.'

For five weeks they fought the storms. Then land was sighted. It seemed for one wonderful moment that they had won through. Then in despair they saw that the cliffs were still the dark cliffs of Tierra del Fuego. They had made no progress at all.

Towards the end of April the squadron got separated. But the Spaniards no longer mattered. Each man was fighting for his survival. There could be no enemies but the elements, and when distress signals were heard they were not heeded. March, April, May, and then the shattered remnants of the *Centurion* reached Socorro Island. But there was no anchorage there, and although Anson dutifully cruised up and down for a fortnight, hoping to meet others of the squadron, none appeared.

She then sailed north to the second meeting-point, the island of Juan Fernandez. Even as far north as this, the *Centurion* was all but wrecked in a sudden violent gale. Her sails were torn away, and the rigging went with them. Then, as she was driven helplessly towards the rocks, the wind veered. This alone saved her. At last on June 9th, the longed-for haven of Juan Fernandez was sighted. The *Centurion*, at any rate, had made it.

But the Horn had proved itself an implacable foe. Of the 506 men who had left England, 292 had been buried.

Only 214 remained, and most of these were suffering from scurvy. Scurvy is a disease of the blood, brought on by a prolonged diet of salt beef. It causes the gums to swell, and raises large ugly spots. In Anson's time, men with scurvy lay down, too weak to move, and died.

The *Centurion* dropped anchor a few miles off-shore. A scouting-party rowed into the bay. When they returned with news of safer waters close inshore, Anson found there were not even enough strong men aboard to hoist the anchor. It had to be dragged.

Anson's situation was desperate. His orders—'to annoy and distress the Spaniards'—had become a sheer mockery. The expedition was so distressed itself it appeared to have already ended in miserable failure. With one important exception everyone believed it had: the exception was Anson. He now emerged as a man of tremendous character.

He had only the one ship, his own. He hoped, nevertheless, that at least some of the others would eventually join him. Almost immediately one of them did. It was the little *Tryall*. She looked to be in difficulties, and Anson sent out a boat to her with supplies of food already gathered from the island. The poor little *Tryall* limped in. Only four of her 96 officers and men were able-bodied enough to work the ship; only 39 had survived at all. These were brought ashore and, along with the sick from the *Centurion*, were housed in tents and fed on the liberal fare that the island offered. This included various sorts of fish, goats' flesh and dog-meat; palm-shoots, turnips and other green stuffs. There was also oil to be got from sea-lions and seals, and plenty of wood for fuel and for repairing the two ships. For men at the end of their tether it was a paradise island of sunshine and crystal streams. The sick quickly began to recover.

Hope for the rest of the squadron began to fade, until one day at the end of June, someone hunting goat in the

mountain spied a sail. The next day it had vanished. Five days later it re-appeared. It was the *Gloucester*. At once Anson despatched a boat with water and food. It did not return, and the next day the *Gloucester* was still drifting about the horizon. Another boat was launched. She did not return either. For a fortnight, and in the face of contrary winds the *Gloucester* was repeatedly blown back from a haven tantalisingly near at hand. More boats and as many men as Anson could spare were sent off to try to tow her in. But the men were too weak.

News came back of the *Gloucester's* plight. Captain Michael had needed the crews of the first two boats to work his ship. Most of her own crew were dead. A handful of officers and their servants were alone fit enough to work.

Early in July she disappeared again. A week later she was seen trying to come in from the east. She was firing distress signals. Anson sent the longboat with more supplies. A storm blew up, and the return of the longboat was delayed. It got back three days later with six dying men in it. Four of these recovered, but the *Gloucester* began to fade away again. Then on July 23rd, five weeks after she had first been sighted she came sailing in from the west. She had seemed like some terrible phantom ship, with a cargo of bones, doomed forever to drift in sight of shores that she could never come to. She was, indeed, almost a wreck, and her crew scarcely more than skeletons; but she had arrived, and now there were three.

In August there was further cause for rejoicing. The *Anna* arrived. The smallest vessel in the squadron, she had miraculously reached the vicinity of Juan Fernandez even before the *Centurion*, but she had been blown towards the islands inshore by storms, and then, having escaped shipwreck, had found a protective bay where her master, Mr. Gerard, and his crew had contacted friendly Indians, and thus survived. What remained of

her precious cargo—for she was one of the two merchantmen—was avidly seized upon, while she herself, battered beyond repair, was bought for £300 by Anson. Everything of value was used to strengthen the other ships. She was then burnt. It was a sad end to a gallant ship.

September came. Anson's three ships had been made as sea-worthy as they ever could be in such make-shift circumstances. That drastically reduced force of men was also as fit now as it ever would be, although of that pathetic band of Chelsea Pensioners, there were now four. Nevertheless Anson had his orders, and he had every intention of carrying them out—somehow. He did not know that the *Pearle* and the *Severn* had turned back during the battle to round the Horn. He did not know that the *Wager* had been wrecked, nor did he realise that the entire Spanish squadron, whose Admiral had unwisely sailed from the River Plate with his repairs half completed, had been utterly shattered in the storms. Only one Spanish ship managed ultimately to get as far as Valparaiso. This was not until the end of 1742, by which time Anson had long left the shores of South America. But for the moment, he could only assume they were cruising about waiting for him somewhere along the coast. He did not, however, allow the thought to deter him from his purpose.

A ship was seen on the horizon on September 8th. It might have been one of the missing English vessels, but as it sheered away from land, Anson set off in pursuit. She was a large ship and it took three days to get within striking distance of her. Meanwhile, decks were cleared for action. Four shots were fired into her rigging. There was no answering gunfire. She turned out to be a harmless Spanish merchantman, the *Nuestra Senora del Monte Carmelo*.

Lieutenant Saumarez, who spoke Spanish, boarded her and found the officers and crew as well as the thirteen

passengers in a state of terror over the fate they imagined awaited them. Saumarez however assured them court-ously 'that their fears were altogether groundless, and that they would find a generous enemy in the Com-modore, who was not less remarkable for his lenity and humanity than for his resolution and courage'.

This was a splendid assessment of, and tribute to, Anson's character. The *Nuestra Senora del Monte Carmelo* was carrying a cargo of sugar and cloth, and silver that alone was valued at £18,000.

But the news Anson received about the war was even more valuable. It was now that he learnt of the disaster that had overtaken the Spanish squadron—a disaster, it could be argued, that in itself justified the expedition.

Anson had been fortunate in other ways too. For when, in February, news of his arrival in South American waters had reached the Viceroy of Lima, the Viceroy had promptly placed an embargo on all shipping along the Atlantic and Pacific coasts, while a second squadron had been fitted out to meet and destroy the inevitably weakened English vessels off Juan Fernandez.

The second Spanish squadron had waited off Juan Fernandez in vain. At length it had been assumed that the English squadron had suffered the same fate as the Spaniards, while trying to round the Horn. Consequently, the Viceroy ordered the dispersal of the squadron and lifted the embargo. The *Nuestra Senora del Monte Carmelo* was just one of many ships now free to sail in what were assumed to be safe waters.

So here was Anson and his crippled squadron, that the world believed had perished, very much alive in the very midst of the enemy. It was clearly a situation that could not last. While it did, he intended to exploit it to the full.

The *Centurion* took her Spanish prize along as a supply ship, but in order to spread the net as wide as possible the three warships hunted alone. Soon the *Tryall* was

sailing back to the *Centurion* with a Spanish merchantman, at least three times her size. She was the *Santa Maria de Aranzaza* with a treasure worth some £5,000. It was a triumph, but the effort to catch her faster quarry, and the effects of a sudden storm, had left the *Tryall* in a bad way. Her pumps could not keep pace with the inflow of water. Anson, therefore, decided to dismantle her of her guns and sink her. The captive-ship then took her place in the squadron, and sailed with the honourable name of *Tryall Prize*.

Anson's decent treatment of his prisoners led many of them to sign on as members of his own crew. A month passed, and no enemy ships were sighted. Anson realised that the failure of the two captive vessels to reach their destinations would now be causing anxiety, and speculation over the fate of the English squadron. He decided therefore to keep his ships together.

Then the *Santa Teresa de Jesus* came into view. The *Centurion* went into the chase, and ultimately took her. Once again Anson treated his prisoners with the utmost consideration, and the ship's master, Bartolome Urrunaga, was shortly to repay Anson for his kindness.

In November another Spanish vessel was captured, the *Neustra Senora del Carmine*, and once again it was information gleaned from those on board her rather than her treasure that proved to be most valuable to the Commodore.

One of his prisoners was an Irishman who had gone out to Mexico in search of a fortune. Somehow he had failed to find one; somehow his wanderings had brought him to Payta on the Peruvian coast, where he ended up in jail. Having escaped he joined the crew of the *Nuestra Senora del Carmine*. His information concerning Payta fascinated Anson. A vast treasure was waiting there to be collected and taken to Mexico by a ship, specially fitted out for speed. The Irishman also told Anson that the

day before he had left Payta, a Spanish cargo-ship had arrived, having been chased by an English man-of-war. This, Anson rightly assessed, was the *Gloucester*. The Governor of Payta had on receiving this information sent a messenger to the Viceroy in Lima. The news was out.

Anson decided that, before the general alarm was given, and rather than wait for the Spanish galleon to collect the treasure, and possibly with her greater speed escape with it, he would attack Payta with a land-force, set fire to it and at the same time seize the treasure.

It was a bold plan in any circumstances. Without his marines it might even have seemed a foolhardy one. However, Anson found an unexpected ally in Bartolome Urrunaga, who was anxious to repay Anson for the kindness he had shown towards himself, his family and the crew of the *Santa Teresa de Jesus*. Urrunaga knew Payta well. He volunteered to act as guide.

In the darkness four boats, carrying a total force of fifty-eight men, stole across the bay. They were seen. The guns from the fort opened fire with livid flashes of light and a volley of musket-fire killed one and wounded three. The rest, skilfully led by their guide, got among the alleyways of the town and then rushed to the fort. The soldiers fled to the hills; the townspeople followed in their nightshirts. In less than a quarter of an hour, the little port was in English hands; its inhabitants had vanished.

It was perhaps as well they had. The wildly excited sailors broke into the houses in search of loot. They broke up everything that was breakable, and took away everything of value that they could lay their hands on. They dressed up in superb Spanish costumes and got terribly drunk.

In the morning the squadron sailed in. The treasure, found in the customs shed, was carried aboard the

Centurion, along with vital livestock, water and other provisions badly needed on the ships.

The Spanish prisoners, after saying goodbye to Anson personally, and thanking him for his kindness, landed and moved into the hills. Anson then ordered the streets of the town to be tarred and the guns put out of action. Payta was then set on fire.

Soon the sky glowed red as flames swept through the buildings. Spanish ships in the harbour were sunk. One was taken over by the squadron. It was the *Solidad*, the fast-sailing vessel that was to have shipped the treasure to Mexico.

The squadron had grown again to seven ships. But apart from the *Centurion* and the *Gloucester*, they were all Spanish!

On board the *Centurion* trouble broke out between those who had returned from Payta rich with spoils and those who having remained behind to man the ship had none. Anson ordered the entire ship's company to be mustered on the quarter-deck. He then congratulated the men on their brilliant capture of Payta, but deplored their refusal to share their plunder with their less fortunate fellows. Thereupon he ordered everything that had been looted to be brought on deck and shared out, and to encourage fair play he added his own share of the prize-money, which he distributed among the landing-party, by way of compensation. 'I hope,' Anson said, 'I shall never hear again of dissensions among you on the lower deck, such as have come to my knowledge this morning, as to the sharing out of prize goods—and may Fortune send us plenty more opportunities for sharing!'

For the rest of that year Anson's squadron cruised about annoying and distressing the Spaniards. Ships were captured and sunk; considerable treasure was amassed, and all the while he was moving slowly north-

wards, until in January 1742, he was ready for the great attack on the Manila galleon, which was due at Acapulco at the end of the month.

It had been captured once before by Drake, and when he had presented the treasure to Queen Elizabeth, it had been worth twice the whole annual revenue of England!

No more devastating blow could be struck at Spain than the capture of this greatest of all treasure-ships.

Unfavourable winds delayed them. By the middle of January, there were still some two hundred miles to go to Acapulco, with the galleon due to arrive at any time.

Anson kept well out of sight of land for fear of raising the alarm. This made it difficult to be sure exactly where Acapulco was. navigation being rather a matter of hit and miss.

Eventually they saw what looked like the twin hills between which stood the harbour. They hung about for weeks but the galleon did not appear. The squadron grew despondent. At last Anson sent a boat in to find out if the galleon had arrived. It returned a week later. There had been no harbour between the hills, but farther east they had eventually spied two other hills, similarly shaped. Anson hurriedly sailed east. The boat was launched again. This time it found the port. From captured fishermen, Anson now learnt that the Manila galleon had got in safely. The Spaniards had been expecting him. Special look-outs had been posted. But since nothing had happened these had now been withdrawn.

Anson also withdrew, and at a respectable distance threw a cordon of ships round the harbour. The galleon must ultimately sail. She would not escape the net.

The vigil went on week after week. The galleon did not sail. Anson did not know that the *Centurion's* boat, originally sent into reconnoitre, had been recognised.

Meanwhile the English squadron, on its ceaseless watch, was getting desperately short of water and food. A hundred miles or so north there was a village, known as Chequetan. There was some kind of anchorage there—and water. Leaving Lieutenant Hughes with a crew of six to patrol the waters beyond Acapulco in an open cutter, Anson sailed away with the squadron.

Early in April, they reached Chequetan. There were Spanish soldiers in the neighbourhood, so that food was difficult to come by, and although the cleaning of the ships was carried out, the threat of a larger Spanish force marching down upon them was a constant anxiety.

Six weeks later Anson sailed south again to pick up the cutter and to get news of the galleon. The cutter was found after much searching. The men in it were in considerable distress. Only the occasional sea-turtle, the occasional shower of rain had saved them from having to go ashore to give themselves up.

The galleon had not sailed. It became apparent now, even to Anson, that his whereabouts were known. He had no alternative but to sail across the Pacific for home. The failure to take the Manila galleon was keenly felt by every member of the expedition. But for the crews there was adequate compensation in the prize-money they had already won, and in the knowledge that they were heading east; that with luck they would be home in the spring of 1743.

But Anson, in his disappointment, seems to have underestimated the extent of his success. A whole Spanish squadron, numerous treasure-ships, and the town of Payta had been lost to the Spaniards—damage one way or another amounting to millions of dollars. He had every reason to feel pleased, but he was not.

In his disappointment other considerations loomed large. Shortage of crew had led him to sink all the Spanish prize-vessels. There were only the two now:

the *Centurion* and the *Gloucester*. Both were in a poor way. Neither had sufficient crew to sail them properly, and the Pacific crossing was not—as most members of the expedition believed—a mere formality.

Soon Anson's shadowy misgivings began to take substance. Scurvy broke out again. For weeks the ships were becalmed. In the intense heat the *Gloucester's* seams opened, and the harassed crew fell exhausted at the pumps. When at last the trade wind blew, the *Gloucester* found herself in a serious condition. Her mainmast was rotten and had to be cut down. There were seven feet of water in her holds. Seventy of her crew were sick. Then the wind died away again. There was no rain. There was very little water left to drink. It was vital to reach the Ladrone Islands without delay. But the *Gloucester's* plight resulted in weeks of delay.

In the middle of August Anson decided she must be abandoned. She was set alight. On the evening of the 15th, she lay deserted in the empty ocean: a great glowing red hulk with columns of smoke rising sullenly into the hot, tropical sky.

So one remained—the *Centurion*, carrying about 350 men, all there were of some 2,000 that had set out from England. And men were dying of scurvy now at the rate of eight or nine a day. For a while Anson himself lay sick. Water was rationed to half a pint a day. Sick as he was, Anson did not forget the sufferings of his crew. To eke out the dwindling water supply he issued his own supply of Madeira wine.

Then on August 27th, three more islands rose encouragingly above the horizon. Soon the misty outlines took on the shape of green trees and other foliage. As a precaution Anson hoisted the Spanish flag and moved on to the central island that was called Tinian. It was here on this island of abundance and tropical splendour that the expedition almost came to a disastrous end.

When the cutter, sent out to reconnoitre, returned it brought excellent news as well as a few prisoners, one of whom was a Spanish sergeant, and the only Spaniard in residence.

Tinian was the Spanish outpost of the Ladrone Islands, of which Guam was the most important. It was a useful supply depot for Spanish merchantmen crossing the Pacific. The Manila galleon called there, and although Anson cleared his decks for action—for land he must—he learnt that no garrison was maintained there. But cattle and poultry roamed about the island at will. There was food and water in profusion. It seemed to the parched and scurvy-ridden crew almost too good to believe.

The sick, more than a hundred of them, were taken ashore. Twenty-one died in the process, but most of the rest responded well to the heavenly climate, to the fresh vegetables and the excellent fruit and meat.

Meanwhile, the sergeant's boat had been secured, so that no information about Anson's arrival could possibly reach Guam. While most of the expedition lived in huts that had conveniently been built by the Spaniards, the rest, about ninety men, slept aboard the *Centurion*. There was plenty of work to do on her. She was still leaking badly. The ship's carpenters did the best they could to stem the water, and eventually made her once again reasonably sea-worthy. It was lucky they did.

On the night of the 22nd of September a great storm rose. In the fury of wind and lashing seas, the *Centurion* broke her cables. She dragged her anchor into deeper waters, and then vainly firing distress signals she was swept out to sea. All that night, those on shore, including Anson, wondered anxiously what was happening to the *Centurion* that in the raging darkness they could not see, and whose signals they did not hear for the wind and the thunder. In the morning they imagined she would be a



CAPTAIN JOHN SMITH



GEORGE ANSON

wreck washed up on the beach. Instead she had disappeared.

The days passed. The *Centurion* did not return. Anson knew that she might be blown anywhere, to Guam or into the hands of Spanish ships.

For Anson and all of them marooned on Tinian, there was the prospect of utter abandonment, or death at the hands of the Spaniards. In the crisis the men looked to Anson. For the moment he could only assure them with all the confidence he could muster that the *Centurion* would in time sail back. Secretly, however, he began to consider the possibilities of enlarging the Spanish vessel, on which the sergeant had sailed from Guam, sufficiently for her to be able to take the two hundred men stranded on the island. It was the opinion of the carpenters that this could be achieved.

Anson now took them all into his confidence. Work began in earnest. Most of the tools were on the *Centurion*. Many new ones had to be made; trees had to be felled to make rollers up which the ship could be hauled. A whole dry dock was built. Anson worked side by side with his crew.

During the first week sails were seen. But they did not belong to the *Centurion*. They were two native craft that for a while hung about in a sinister way off-shore and then disappeared.

Work continued more feverishly than ever. For soon the Spaniards would receive word of strangers on the island. The Spanish vessel was hauled ashore and cut in half ready to be lengthened. It was early October. To raise the men's morale Anson announced that they would sail on November 5th.

But suddenly on October 11th, shouts and roars were heard on the hill. Men working up there came racing down bellowing for the Commodore. After nearly three weeks the *Centurion* had been sighted. Then the quiet,

self-composed Commodore rushed down to the shore in delight. The *Centurion* sailed in. Anson boarded her, and from now on lived in his cabin.

On August 24th, 1829, nearly ninety years later, a notice appeared in *The Times* to the effect that a whaling ship 'in weighing anchor at the island of Tinian, hooked up the anchor of the *Centurion* . . .', a truly miraculous chance.

On October 20th, the *Centurion* sailed by arrangement rather than mischance. The trade wind lifted her sails and she was able to cover 120 miles a day. Twelve days later she was in Chinese waters, among islands and treacherous reefs and unknown currents where winds blew uncertainly and typhoons were a recognised hazard. The *Centurion* nosed her way forward while soundings were taken carefully and frequently. Then one morning she found herself close to the shores of China and in the middle of a vast fleet of Chinese fishing-boats, whose crews took absolutely no notice of this giant intruder at all. A Chinese pilot was hired to bring the vessel to Macao, a Portuguese possession, that lay at the tip of the peninsular formed by the West and Canton Rivers. In the estuary many foreign ships lay at anchor. Anson wanted to go right up the seventy miles to the city of Canton itself, where he expected repairs to be done on the *Centurion* and provisions brought on board.

China was a vast and mysterious country that kept itself to itself. China did not know anything about Anson and the Royal Navy, and Anson knew very little about China. He did not know, for instance, that everything took time; that Europeans were not admitted to Canton; that the Viceroy, the direct link with the Emperor, was almost impossible to contact. Letters addressed to him were rarely delivered, and yet the Viceroy alone could authorise him to carry out any of his various plans.

The first letter Anson wrote to the Viceroy was not

answered, although he waited hopefully for a month. The Hoppo, a kind of representative of the Viceroy, refused in the meantime to allow the *Centurion's* barge to go up the river. Anson angrily decided that he could get all he wanted from the Portuguese Governor at Macao. He soon found that he was wrong. The Portuguese Governor was ultimately dependent on the Viceroy. He could get nothing from Macao.

Anson wrote another long letter to the Viceroy, but the Hoppo refused to deliver it. Now thoroughly incensed and with the prestige of England and the Royal Navy at stake, Anson warned the Hoppo that if the letter were not delivered he would arm his boats and send the letter by one of his own officers. The arrival of a party of armed foreign devils in Canton might easily have resulted in the Hoppo's execution. The Hoppo sent the letter.

Two days afterwards a long multi-coloured procession of boats floated down the river to the strains of weird Eastern music. The mandarins, with their quaint drooping moustaches that decorated their inscrutable faces, brought skilled craftsmen to inspect the ship. Anson welcomed them aboard in all his finery, and while entertaining them with chicken and brandy took the opportunity to point out the power of his guns, and the wealth of his cargo. It was this, of course, that impressed them most of all. This and Anson's cunningly innocent observation that until the work on the *Centurion* was finished he would remain in Canton. The Chinese did not want Anson and his aggressive warship to remain in Canton, especially since he refused to pay harbour dues—that by International Law warships did not have to pay. The Chinese did not recognise International Laws. One way and another they found the Commodore a somewhat awesome figure.

They proceeded to repair his ship. By April she was

ready to sail for home. She had by this time only about half her complement. It would be hard work manning her but no one minded: they were heading for home, so they thought, so the Chinese thought, so everybody thought—except Anson.

The *Centurion* was well out to sea when Anson ordered Lieutenant Saumarez to muster every officer and man on the quarter deck. There they all waited, expectant, mystified. 'Gentlemen,' Anson said, 'and all of you, my gallant lads, forward, I have sent for you, now that we are once more clear of the shore after five months refitting in harbour, to declare to you where we are bound.

'Not to England, not even to Batavia—at least, not immediately, but'—there was a tense hush, 'to Cape Espiritu Santo, in the Philippine Islands, there to catch the Manila galleon.'

He explained to them how he had got news of the galleon's movements, how, although outnumbered and outgunned, they would yet take the great ship; he roused them to a tremendous enthusiasm. When he came to the end of his speech he roared out, 'What do you say to this, my gallant lads?' And there followed a great bellow of cheers.

So the *Centurion* turned eastwards and sailed south of Formosa on her thousand-mile quest of the Spanish galleon.

They arrived off Cape Espiritu Santo early in June.

Curiously enough, and of course unknown to Anson, the Manila galleon was fully aware of the *Centurion* lurking off the Cape. Spies in Macao had guessed Anson's intentions and had transmitted them via Guam to the Spanish Admiral, who had also been told that the *Centurion* was in a poor state of repair (which she was) and was hopelessly undermanned (which she was). On the other hand the Spanish galleon was in first class condition, powerfully armed and with six hundred

fighting men aboard her. Far from trying to avoid the *Centurion* she had every intention of sinking her.

On June 19th, an excited midshipman saw from the masthead the majestic sails of the galleon rising above the horizon. At once the decks were cleared for action, and Anson sailed to cut her off. The galleon came closer. She did not appear to have altered course at all. She came steadily on. Anson could not understand this. Why did she drive on with full bellying sails, as if the *Centurion* did not exist?

The galleon was three miles away when she took in her top-gallant sails and fired a gun. 'Just to amuse them', Anson ordered a gun to be fired back. The whole situation was as puzzling as it was unexpected. Nevertheless, Anson had his plans, which during the weeks of waiting, had been rehearsed incessantly. The galleon's timber was reputed to be so strong that it was impenetrable. Anson had told his men they would manoeuvre so close to the enemy that the *Centurion's* broadsides would go clean through one bow and out the other! He had insufficient crew to fire all his guns at once. But in a way this suited him. While loading and re-loading went on, teams of men would run from gun to gun, firing each as it was ready. The Spaniards tended to time enemy broadsides and take cover between volleys. Anson's plan, if they did this, would cause intense confusion among the gunners. Further, the best marksmen were in the *Centurion's* tops, acting as snipers, ready to pick off with their muskets the men giving orders.

By midday the two ships were less than half a mile apart. From the *Centurion's* decks, Anson could see the Spaniards rather belatedly clearing their ship for action. He decided after all not to hold his fire but to make them pay for their casualness, and fired a few preliminary rounds into the middle of them. He then ordered preparations to go ahead for boarding. He had no intention of

trying to board the Spanish galleon, for he knew he would be hopelessly outnumbered. It was pure bluff, but, as he learnt afterwards, it had a strong psychological effect upon the enemy. It seems suddenly to have occurred to the Spanish Admiral that the reports he had received were false; that in Canton the *Centurion* had taken on a vast number of recruits; that she was after all fighting fit.

The two ships closed in on one another, their guns now blazing. They were so close that the *Centurion's* gun-wads fell flaming on the decks of the galleon. Smoke and flames shot up to the height of the mizzen-top while 'The Commodore stood upon the deck with his sword drawn in the thickest of the fire', smothered in the smoke of battle, his cool presence there driving his men on to greater efforts.

For an hour the guns thundered, and all the time the men on the *Centurion's* tops were firing at the Spanish gunners, shooting down the officers, until the Spanish Admiral, who had been gallantly encouraging his crew, was struck by a musket-ball and fell. The dead thickened on the Spanish decks; the officers continued to fall to the deadly aim of the snipers; without them, and without their inspired leader, the gunners' resolution began to waver; their fire became fitful, as their few remaining officers, desperately trying to keep the gunners firing, were picked off one by one.

And then Anson saw, amid the confusion, a man running aloft to lower the Spanish standard at the mast, and another to haul down the flag from the jack-staff. He quickly ordered the musket-men to stop firing.

The galleon, after a fight that had lasted for an hour and twenty minutes had surrendered. Sixty-two Spaniards had been killed, some eighty wounded. The *Centurion's* losses were three dead and fourteen wounded.

The galleon, the *Nuestra Senora de Cobadonga*, was re-named 'Centurion Prize', and was taken in tow, while

part of her treasure, all of which amounted to the value of £400,000, was transferred, chest after chest of silver, to the *Centurion*.

Anson now had to cope with nearly 600 prisoners. He hastened back to Canton, where the Chinese officials were not at all pleased to see him.

They called him 'The Great Thief' because he refused to pay harbour dues; he forced their pilots to guide him up the river; he ignored their forts, and even threatened to destroy them with his powerful guns if his ship was interfered with.

His behaviour terrified them; and if it came to the ears of the Viceroy that he was intending to take the barge right up to Canton itself, they would lose their heads.

At the same time, they discovered that with his fabulous treasure, Anson was a tremendously rich man. This impressed them. Then when they further discovered that two-thirds of the men on board were prisoners, they were dumbfounded. They could not understand why Anson did not kill them. 'The Great Thief' became 'The Great Captain'.

On hearing that a Chinese pilot he had employed to guide the *Centurion* up-river had been whipped by the Chinese authorities, Anson, typically enough, rewarded the man with a sum of money that made the whipping seem well worthwhile.

Anson still wished to pay his respects to the Viceroy, but he was having no more success in this matter than the Viceroy was having in the matter of harbour dues. Meanwhile, the mandarins were instructed to tackle Anson on the subject of prisoners. Determined to win something out of the English Commodore, they now insisted that, with China being on friendly terms with Spain, the Spanish prisoners must be released. Nothing could have suited Anson better. But he did not say so. Eventually, as a special favour, he allowed himself to be

persuaded to let them go. He was now permitted to move up to better anchorage, but the permit for ship's stores that he had expected from his 'concession' was still not forthcoming. He decided at last to beard the Viceroy in his palace. This might be difficult; it could certainly be dangerous.

He therefore decided to appoint Lieutenant Brett Captain in command of the *Centurion* and gave him his instructions if he (Anson) did not return. This appointment was strictly contrary to Admiralty orders, but in the circumstances, Anson considered his action justified.

A long procession of boats of all nations pushed up the river. But he was eventually deterred from trying to break into the palace by members of the East India Company. Still without a food permit he returned to his ship.

And then a few days later the Viceroy was suddenly compelled to seek Anson's help. Just beyond the walls of the city, among the wooden hovels of the poor and the warehouses of the Chinese and European merchants, a fire broke out that the Chinese seemed quite incompetent to deal with. In a short time the city walls were in danger, as the fire raged along the wharfs, spreading wildly towards cargoes of highly inflammable camphor. Anson sent forty men.

Meanwhile some of the stores of camphor caught fire, and great tongues of white flame shot up into the sky. The Chinese stood about in terror, lamely invoking their protecting gods to subdue the fire. But the Chinese gods were apparently not interested.

The forty sailors, however, worked fiercely to flatten a path before the advancing flames, hacking down shacks and dragging woodwork away until a lane had been made too broad for the flames to leap. As the fire consumed itself and died down Chinese looters appeared,

and once more the Viceroy appealed to Anson to protect his exposed stores. Anson obliged.

It is hardly surprising that three days afterwards he received an invitation to the palace. It was November 30th.

A guard of honour, 200 strong, met Anson and his retinue at the South Gate, while inside the palace grounds were 10,000 soldiers. Anson and his officers were led into the Great Hall of Audience where the Viceroy, gorgeously robed, sat between his ministers, his legs folded under him on a cushion of silk.

Anson showed tremendous dignity as he moved forward amid all the exotic Chinese splendours of the palace. He did not 'kow-tow', nor did he remove his hat on being presented, for he considered himself the King's representative, and the Viceroy's equal. Mutual compliments were paid, and then Anson made his various requests, which were immediately granted. The vexed question of harbour dues was not mentioned.

In an adjoining room lavish refreshments had been laid out, but hearing that the Viceroy would not be present, Anson politely excused himself, and with dignity returned with his officers to the *Centurion*, to the sound of guns saluting from the ships at anchor.

In fact during his two brief visits to China Anson, through the force of his personality, had greatly enhanced England's prestige abroad. He had been bold, and had impressed the Chinese of the power of English naval craft; he had shown a combination of tact and determination and dignity that would be remembered long after his death. He had further won the admiration of the Viceroy by his prompt and efficient handling of what might so easily have developed into a fire of historic magnitude.

The English were, after all, remarkably humane; but they could not be trifled with. Those who came after Anson to these foreign waters were to benefit enormously from the example he had set.

On December 15th, the *Centurion* sailed. Her prize had been shorn of all its useful trappings and sold to the Portuguese for £1,000. Of nearly 2,000 men, only 145 were returning, but in her holds was cargo that today would be worth some £5,000,000.

The expedition sailed westwards. Then, as they were coming into home-waters, Anson had a slice of luck. Since March, England had been at war with France. Sailing down the Channel was a powerful French fleet that could have—and undoubtedly would have—taken the *Centurion*, her Commodore and her gallant crew with the greatest of ease.

But there was a fog. Unaware of the frightful danger ahead, Anson sailed blithely on and clean through the middle of the enemy ships! Only when he arrived safely in Portsmouth did he learn how handsomely Fortune had favoured him.

It was April 1744. The sailor-traveller had returned, triumphant. But the Admiralty put out no flags of welcome. The promotions Anson had made during the long voyage, and which he now wished to have confirmed, had contravened Admiralty orders. He was in disgrace.

The King came to hear of the quarrel and through his good offices Anson was offered promotion to Rear Admiral of the Blue. Since his own officers, however, had failed to win their promotions, Anson, typically enough, refused his own. So with England at war with France and Spain, one of her greatest naval captains retreated, unacclaimed and apparently unwanted, into the country, where he languished for nearly a year.

With a change of government there came long-needed changes at the Admiralty too. Anson joined the staff. Drastic reforms were pushed through. Most of these were instigated by Anson. None knew better than he the weaknesses of the Navy's warships; their wooden

hulls were replaced with copper, through which no teredo worm, however ambitious, could penetrate. He knew from bitter experience that the average anchor was dangerously light. He remembered, too, being marooned on Tinian Island where, had the Spaniards come, he would doubtless have been unrecognised, and hanged for a privateer: he now insisted on naval uniform for officers, that they at least might be recognised in time of war as lawful enemies, and treated as such. Sadly, too, he remembered the poor Chelsea Pensioners, only four of whom survived the terrible voyage. In 1755 the Royal Regiment of Marines came into being. There would now be proper soldiers trained to fight their battles at sea.

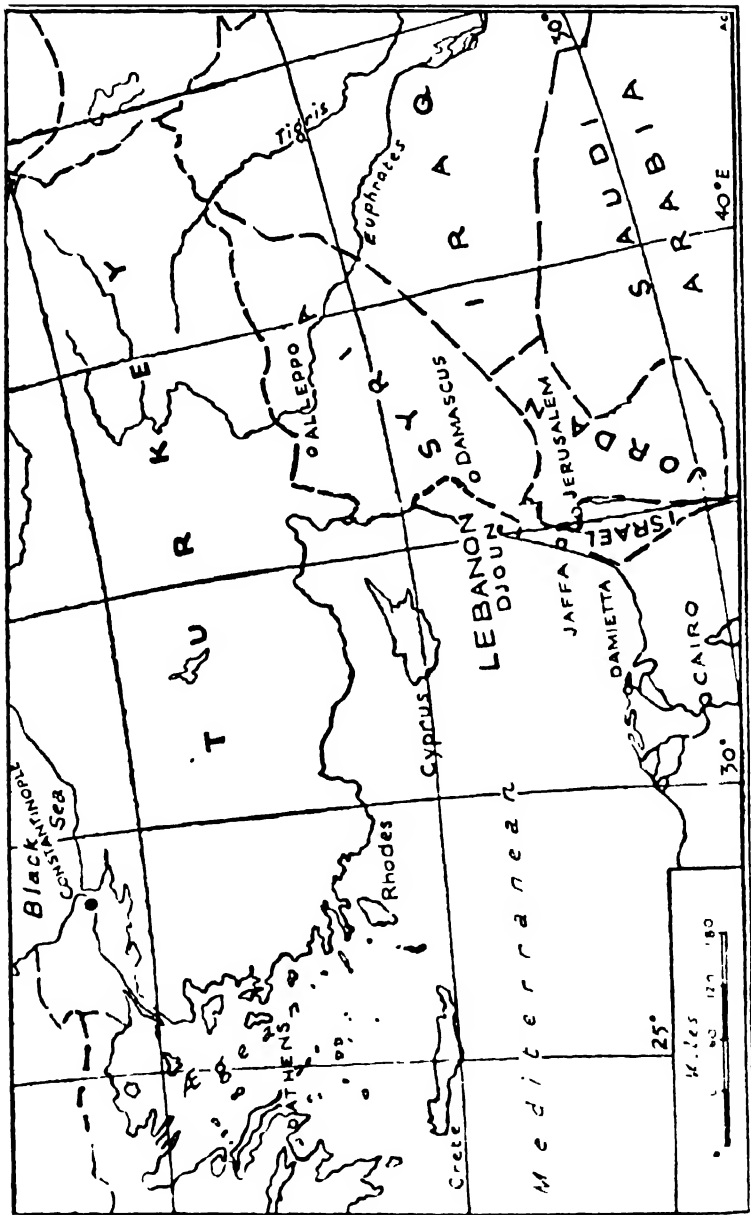
Anson's expert and critical eye probed deep into the Navy's shortcomings. He crushed corruption in the dockyards, and overhauled the entire system of punishments.

Under his guidance the Navy became a dominating power, the basic power that brought England such overwhelming success during the Seven Years' War—those seven momentous years when England fashioned her empire.

Meanwhile he had married Elisabeth, daughter of the first Earl of Hardwicke, and for his services to the nation had received a peerage. In 1762 he was appointed Admiral of the Fleet; was taken ill a few months later and died at the age of sixty-five.

Anson was first and foremost a sailor, ultimately and fondly known as the 'Father of the British Navy'. He was, for all that, a great traveller too, who knew the winds of ocean and the sands of foreign shores. He had smelled the tropical lushness of the Brazilian coast and eaten its fruits; he had seen the black, forbidding cliffs of Cape Horn, and heard the wild cries of lonely sea-birds. He had lived on palm-fringed islands hitherto unknown to

Englishmen. He had marched through the streets of Canton and sniffed its strange exotic perfumes; and as the old *Centurion* ploughed across the eastern seas, he had watched the porpoises follow her and the flying fish leap from beneath her bows. And to the sights and sounds smells and colours of foreign lands, which are the traveller's joy, Anson could couple those experiences of anxiety, privation and even bloodshed, which are the traveller's peril.



III

LADY HESTER STANHOPE

(1776-1839)

YOUNG Lady Hester Stanhope had been deeply stirred when the French Ambassador, Count D'Adhemar, came to Chevening, her father's house in Kent. The Ambassador with his dandified dress and courtly elegance, not to mention his handsome and splendidly appavelled footmen, aroused romantic feelings in her. Clearly, the country from which these dashing and heroic figures came must be visited.

And now, a few weeks later, here she was on holiday at the seaside at Hastings. For a moment she had escaped from her two younger sisters, Griselda and Lucy, and from the watchful eye of her governess. She saw a small boat moored close by and she knew that the coast of France was just beyond the horizon. She jumped in, cast off and began to row away. The first of Lady Hester's journeys had begun. It was not a long journey nor a very successful one, for a boat-load of fishermen quickly set off in pursuit and overtook her, and all too soon she was back on English soil and in the hands of an angry governess.

But she had shown, even as a child, an indomitable will and a taste for adventure.

People often travel in order to escape, either from the past or, as they think, from themselves, or from some threat of the future. In the case of Lady Hester Stanhope, it was as if Fate had decreed that she should become a great traveller, for all the bonds that tied her to her

country were one by one severed by some crushing, personal blow. From these cruel blows she ran away at the age of thirty-three to build up a new life out of the wreck of the old.

She grew up among famous relations and in the knowledge of illustrious forbears, and with travellers' blood in her veins. Her great grandfather had been that highly successful merchant-adventurer, 'Diamond' Pitt, who had finally become an important official of the East India Company. Her grandfather was the great Earl of Chatham, and her uncle, William Pitt, the younger, and she was related to the Grenvilles.

But in her childhood it was her father who cut the weirdest figure, and who contributes most to the causes that led her to leave England.

Lord Stanhope was an inventive genius and eccentric of somewhat uncertain temper. On the lake at Chevening—carefully wired off to keep the children away—he had perfected the first steam-driven water-craft, and was very annoyed when the Admiralty considered it impractical; he invented a lightning conductor, a calculating machine and a device for tuning musical instruments. He became a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Politically, he was most odd. From his studies at Geneva he had developed an enthusiasm for those doctrines that helped to bring about the French revolution, and to live up to his democratic principles he discarded his title and styled himself 'Citizen Stanhope'. He then had the coronet removed from his plate and from the gates of Chevening and he did away with his carriages and horses—for they were 'too damned aristocratical'.

In his personal ways he was even odder. He slept under twelve blankets and with all the windows open, and as a young man he had once appeared at court with unpowdered hair. He was a severe disciplinarian and

capable of the most terrifying fits of rage. Whenever Lady Hester showed inclinations towards finery, he dressed her up in the coarsest clothes he could find, and regularly forced her to go and look after the turkeys on the common.

It was an uncomfortable household and often frightening. It is not surprising that the rest of the family escaped from his dictatorship at the earliest opportunity. His first wife died when Lady Hester was four, and his second, bored and discomfited by life at 'Democracy Hall', moved out into a neighbouring lodge from where she made constant social visits to London and appears to have shown more interest in her hairdressers than in her three step-daughters and three sons.

Lady Hester was her father's favourite. She had inherited his imperiousness and his courage. She was the only one who was not afraid of him. Sometimes he would dismiss the rest of the family and say, 'Now we must talk a little philosophy.' According to him, 'she could split a hair'. On one occasion in a fit of passion he took hold of her and threatened her with a knife, but as she recalls later, 'I felt no fear, only pity for the arm that held it.' Her governesses, obeying his orders, were equally tyrannical. The three little girls had their backs 'pinched in by boards', and tireless efforts were made to flatten Lady Hester's instep that was 'so high that a little kitten could walk under the sole of my foot' - so she described it in after years with that touch of exaggeration that marked and intensified all her reminiscences.

No wonder they all left. Lucy, the youngest, eloped with the local chemist; Griselda married an army officer, and Hester, at twenty-four, went to live with her grandmother in Somerset.

She had grown up into a young lady of great character: proud, self-willed and full of passionate energy. The authority she had so resented at home she now exerted

over others at every opportunity. She began by rescuing her brothers from their father's tyranny. None of them had been sent to school or given any proper education. One was apprenticed to a blacksmith, another to a shoemaker; the eldest, Lord Mahon, stayed at home, wasting his life away without any apparent hope of redress. But Lady Hester was determined to free them. With great daring she smuggled her eldest brother out of the country and arranged for him to be enrolled at Erlangen University, in Germany, and a year later, with the help of her uncle, William Pitt, she got her brothers, Charles and James, commissioned in the armed forces. For these affronts to his authority, Lord Stanhope never forgave her. He struck her off his will, and the gates of Chevening were closed irrevocably against her.

This blow was to have serious consequences, but at the time she was so delighted with her success that she did not care, and threw herself with abandon into the gaieties of London's glittering society.

Here, as the niece of Pitt, she commanded respect, but her quick wit, her talent for mimicking those in high places, her beauty--these made her the idol of the eligible young men of the day. Not that Lord Camelford was considered very eligible. But it is characteristic of Lady Hester, with her frankness and courage and complete disregard of conventions and gossip, to have chosen to consort with the most notorious reprobate of the day. He was her cousin; at best a sort of Robin Hood, lavishing money on the drunken sailors he met at the drinking dens in the lowest quarters of the city, or protecting the poor against the rich and against the shady transactions they practised among themselves.

Once, in company with Lady Hester, he received some bad coins as change from a toll-gate keeper. On noticing these he leapt down from his carriage and

grabbed the man by the throat, terrifying him out of his wits. As he explained afterwards bad coins could deprive a poor man of his supper.

Lady Hester was immensely impressed.

At worst, however, Lord Camelford was a drunkard and a murderer, having quarrelled with a naval officer and shot him in a fit of temper. He picked quarrels in fact and fought duels at the least provocation, until fashionable London moved in dread of him. He himself was killed in a duel in 1804, and few mourned for him.

Meanwhile, despite all the gossip over her affairs, she continued to be a social success. 'My complexion,' she says of these years, 'was like alabaster . . . my lips were of such a beautiful carnation that very few women had the like. Nor were the roses wanting in my cheeks . . . and to all this was added a permanency in my looks that fatigue of no sort could impair.' Modesty was not one of Lady Hester's virtues.

In 1802 she set off for a grand tour of the continent. But rumours of war soon forced her to return to England, where she found her grandmother dead and herself homeless. In her distress she turned to her uncle, and he, never failing her, invited her to live at Walmer Castle on the South coast. 'Here then,' she writes, 'am I happy to a degree: exactly in the sort of society I most like.'

The society she refers to consisted mostly of handsome young army officers. She was in her element riding—she was a superb horsewoman—with Pitt along the threatened coastland, attending parades, inspecting regiments, and in the evenings—free from female competition (she preferred donkeys to women)—entertaining the young subalterns with her charm and her wit.

Then with England once more at war with France, Pitt was recalled to office, and Lady Hester moved to Downing Street to become mistress of his household. How she loved it! In her self-assured and dominating

way she could not resist poking fun at Pitt's ministers and embarrassing their wives. She mocked her own powerful 'broad-bottomed' Grenville relations, referred to Castlereagh as 'His monotonous Lordship' and treated them all—ambassadors, ministers and princes with a perplexing mixture of graciousness and contempt. 'Conversation,' someone said, 'never flagged in her company.' But she was riding for a fall and the fall was imminent.

She fell in love with Lord Grenville Leveson-Gower, an attractive and adventurous young man who, like so many before him, became fascinated by such a beautiful, talented and influential young woman as Lady Hester. The affair began promisingly, but soon Lord Granville found himself overwhelmed by her possessiveness, by her dominating masculinity and, what seemed to him, her appalling vitality. For the first time in her life, Lady Hester failed to conquer, and her great pride did not for once sustain her. Her heart was broken, and she could not conceal it. Behind her back the whole of London laughed. Worse was in store, for scarcely had she recovered from her affair with Lord Grenville, than her beloved uncle became seriously ill. On the night before his death, she went into his room, and on recognising her, he thanked her tenderly for all she had done for him, murmuring as she left him, 'Dear soul, I know she loves me.'

Once again she found herself homeless, with an income too small to support her and bereft of her greatest friend. But Pitt, when he knew he was dying did not forget her. 'If the nation,' he said, 'should think fit to reward my services, let them take charge of my niece,' and Parliament accordingly granted a pension of £1,200 to one whose father with all his enormous wealth refused even a penny.

She had suddenly overnight become a woman of no

great consequence, and society, that so recently had bowed and scraped to her whims, turned a cool and condescending eye upon her, and smiled in pity.

Her health deteriorated, and yet all was not quite lost. During her years of triumph she had met Sir John Moore and, like her uncle, she had greatly admired his qualities as a soldier. Now a warm friendship sprang up between them, and when Sir John Moore was sent to Spain as commander-in-chief they wrote to one another constantly. 'I wish you were with us,' he writes, and then again, 'If I can beat the French, I shall return to you with satisfaction.'

Alas, he never returned. He was killed at Corunna, and his last words were of Lady Hester.

No sooner had she received the appalling news than she heard that her brother Charles had died in the same action.

It seemed that life had nothing to offer her but bitterness and loss. She spent a few dreary months in Montagu Square. She took a farm in a lonely part of Wales, till finally with that courage that was so characteristic of her and with the vitality that not even the worst of fates could entirely suppress, Lady Hester Stanhope started to plan a new life abroad.

It is not long before her powerful spirit is re-asserting itself. A letter to General Richard Grenville states clearly the kind of ship she wishes to travel on. She sums up at the end: 'I will give you no further trouble on this subject for I will ask for nothing more and refuse every offer I don't like with the contempt it deserves.' Lady Hester seems quite herself again.

Apparently the frigate *Jason* met with her approval, and on February 10th, 1810, it left Portsmouth on convoy duty for Gibraltar, and Lady Hester at thirty-three set off on her memorable travels from which she was destined not to return.

She had intended to go to Sicily, but her route depended on the whereabouts of Napoleon's armies, and when Sicily became politically allied to the French, she found herself drifting, stage by stage, towards the friendly Ottoman Empire, whose cause she was to champion for the rest of her life.

The party consisted of her brother James, Mr. Nassau Sutton, one of the young officers she had entertained at Walmer Castle, and her private physician, Dr. Meryon, a young Oxford graduate whose memoirs furnish so much of the information of Lady Hester's journeys.

The *Jason* took a month to reach Gibraltar. It was becalmed off Land's End, and then ran into a fearful gale, that all but resulted in shipwreck off Trafalgar. Most of the party succumbed to the miseries of seasickness, but Lady Hester, during the worst ravages of storm, remained on deck, quite unperturbed, recognising, no doubt, in the screaming wind and racing seas a spirit comparable to her own.

The rock disappointed her. It was an overcrowded fortress, full of soldiers and rich Spanish refugees escaping from the French armies. It was noisy and expensive and the social life reminded her too much of the London days she wanted to forget. When her brother left her to rejoin his regiment at Cadiz and Mr. Nassau Sutton, having proved himself an unsuitable companion, went off to Majorca, Lady Hester and Dr. Meryon and the servants set sail for Malta.

Dr. Meryon was delighted to find himself completely in charge of her, for he had already discovered in his demanding, ungrateful but exalted patient an object of veneration and hero-worship, and always resented the presence of other men about her. His delight was short-lived. For at Malta Lady Hester met a young man, fourteen years her junior, and fell in love with him.

Michael Bruce was rich and attractive and amusing.

Besides the brilliant banquets, the balls and the visits from the Governor, General Oakes, there were now for Lady Hester picnics with Michael Bruce and moonlit walks in the gardens of San Antonio among the fountains and the orange groves and sweet-scented oleander.

Poor Dr. Meryon! Writing of Lady Hester at this time, he says that she has 'contrived to affront almost all the women of the place. . . . She accepts no invitation except from General Oakes.' And later, 'Bruce is handsome enough to move any lady's heart. . . . I don't like Bruce.'

Bruce, for his part, found it tiresome always having the doctor's company, and managed to have him excluded from the various social engagements that previously he had been so proud to attend. The tension that grew up between the two men was lessened, however, by the tact of Lord Sligo, Bruce's friend, a wild but charming Irishman who was cruising about in the Mediterranean in his private yacht and who was already in trouble with the Admiralty for commandeering two naval ratings to help man his boat. For this crime he was later to stand trial at the Old Bailey and to serve a short prison sentence. Sligo now, and again later, did much to smooth out the sensitive doctor's feelings.

For four months Lady Hester remained on the island, but by August the heat had become intolerable and her party, which now included Michael Bruce, boarded the *Belle Poule* and headed for the Ionian Islands.

Zante, Patras, Corinth, where Lord Sligo re-joined them, Athens: whether by Government transport, felucca or mule, the grand procession of dragomans, valets in livery, armed guards, cooks and interpreters and guides, not to mention her physician, lover and friend, journeyed across the blue Ionian waters and over the parched and barren hills, with Lady Hester, fêted, as the niece of Pitt, by Governors, naval captains and

consuls, and constantly the object of wild surmise among the incredulous villagers.

As they entered Piræus, the port of Athens, a figure dived off the molehead. It was Lord Byron.

Like Lady Hester, Byron coveted the limelight and was by nature inordinately proud. Athens was too small to house two such electric personalities. Byron, commenting on their meeting in a letter, says, 'I saw the Lady Hester Stanhope at Athens and do not admire that dangerous thing—a female wit.'

Lady Hester was equally scathing. Anybody could write verses, and as for thoughts, 'perhaps,' she suggested to Dr. Meryon, 'he had picked up some old book that nobody knew anything about and stole his ideas out of it'. Furthermore—she thought—there was 'a good deal of vice' about his looks.

Lord Sligo now left them to return to face the wrath of the Admiralty, and Lady Hester with her party moved on to the great city of Constantinople, capital of the Ottoman Empire, residence of the Sublime Porte and of the Sultan himself. In the streets the women walked with their faces covered and lived in the seclusion of the harems, without rights or claims to social intercourse.

To this land of veiled women Lady Hester came at midnight and was borne on a sedan-chair to a house at Pera, the European quarter of the city.

Among the proud and warlike inhabitants of this vast Empire she was to make her home, teaching loyalty to the Sultan and to the Arab chieftains under him; she was to become a haven for those fleeing for their lives; a Queen among the destitute and a formidable enemy to the powerful forces that resented her authority.

She became in the East a figure of legend, and perhaps that legend began a few days after her arrival.

The Sultan was on his way to the mosque. The superb

procession moved majestically through the streets. Diamond-studded swords, jewelled bridles, flashed in the sunlight, as the fabulous retinue paraded before the multitude the riches of the empire. The crowds, pressed back by the spears of the janissaries, stood in awed silence their heads bowed in devotion. One head was not bowed. Lady Hester, unveiled and mounted on a splendid horse, sat erect and commanding and yet with an air of reverence, watching the grand procession pass. The crowds stared at her, amazed at her temerity, deeply impressed by her courage. She seemed to them neither man nor woman but 'a being apart'.

Dr. Meryon writes: 'There is probably no other example of a European female having ridden through the streets of Constantinople in this manner; and it may be reckoned as proof of her courage that she did so, and of her conduct that she did so without insult.'

It is clear that her pride and courage went a long way in winning her the affections of the Turks. 'I have made my own way with the Turks,' she writes, and then in a letter to Michael Bruce's father she says triumphantly, 'One of the greatest men here is to show me his harem himself,' and goes on to describe how the head of a subversive pasha 'was handed about on a silver dish as if it had been a Pine Apple'.

Now she receives an invitation to inspect the Turkish fleet and shocks the Minister Plenipotentiary to the Sublime Porte, Mr. Stratford Canning, by going aboard in 'a pair of overalls, a military great-coat and a cocked hat' and is entertained in 'very high style'. She further embarrasses him when she is discovered having secret meetings with the French minister, who has promised to procure her a French passport so that she can reach Paris and meet Napoleon, one of the few figures of her time she considered her equal.

This intrigue caused a good deal of scandal both in

England and in Constantinople where the doors of the British Embassy were subsequently barred to her.

Angrily she wrote to her friend General Oakes, 'Canning is a bigot and an idiot.' Lady Hester was not accustomed to having her actions—and in this case, her patriotism—questioned.

Her row with Canning made it an appropriate moment to leave the capital.

It was towards the end of the year 1811 and the party set off for Egypt. Two days out of Rhodes a southeasterly wind sprang up, which quickly increased to gale force, and whipped up tremendous seas. The Greek captain decided to turn back. It was then discovered that the ship's hold was full of water and that the ship itself had sprung a leak. When the pumps were brought out they were useless so that the crew of fifteen and the ten members of Lady Hester's party began desperately to bail out the water with buckets.

In the middle of the struggle the ship heeled over and never righted itself. The long-boat was launched and almost swamped as the party battled towards two rocks jutting out before the island of Rhodes. When at last they scrambled, exhausted, on to the rock, they realised they had brought no provisions and no fresh water. The captain decided to try to reach Rhodes and to return with rescue ships.

All next day Lady Hester and her companions waited, with the fearful thought that they had been betrayed and left to die on the inhospitable rock, but towards evening a ship was sighted and provisions landed. The crew having previously fortified themselves with arrack were now drunk and violent and insisted on returning at once, despite the darkness and mountainous seas. After four hours of perilous rowing they were swept up by giant waves, swamped and flung on to the shore at Rhodes.

Michael Bruce writes: 'It is impossible for me to do justice to Lady Hester for the coolness and intrepidity displayed by her during the whole of this trying occasion,' while Dr. Meryon describes how during the chaos of bailing out the sinking ship, Lady Hester staggered about distributing wine to the frightened and exhausted crew as she spurred them on to greater efforts.

From the marshy shore where they had landed, the bedraggled party moved inland until they came to a windmill. Here, while the heroic Lady Hester, undeterred by the rats that seethed around her, collapsed on a bed of straw and fell into a deep sleep, the rest, preferring the rain to the rats, huddled round a fire outside.

In the shipwreck they had lost almost everything, and the poor doctor was despatched to Smyrna to replenish their losses, a costly journey, the burden of which fell on the ever-liberal Crauford Bruce, Michael's indulgent and over-anxious father.

Lady Hester was now confronted with the problem of clothes. She had salvaged none and European clothes could not be obtained. If she wore the costume of a Turkish woman she would be compelled to behave like one and forfeit her freedom. It became a pleasing necessity therefore to put on masculine attire—broad, baggy trousers, embroidered jacket, turban—a mode of dress she never fully discarded, for with her tall, upright figure, her bold blue eyes and Turkish robes she was often mistaken for a handsome young Bey, causing widespread alarm among the ladies whenever she entered the Turkish baths.

It was not until the party reached Alexandria that they discovered the costumes they had so fancifully chosen represented merely the class of 'small gentry'. Consequently, and once more at Crauford Bruce's expense, Lady Hester, for her visit to Mehemet Ali, spent £280 on her robes: gold-embroidered pantaloons, magnificent

cashmere shawls and waistcoat: the court dress of a Tunisian Bey.

The Pasha did Lady Hester the singular honour of receiving her standing, and he was so impressed by her presence that he reviewed his troops as a special gesture of esteem. They subsequently met on several occasions.

Meheniet Ali had seized power by mass-murder. It must have been this ruthless power, lying behind his gentle charm, which fascinated Lady Hester, but which did not deter her from openly visiting the widows of his victims still living in Cairo, nor restrain her from defying him whenever later he embarked on a campaign to broaden the frontiers of his Empire. There in her hill-top fortress-home in Lebanon she was to become the woman who gave him 'more trouble than all the insurgent people of Syria and Palestine'.

By May of 1812 the party were on their way to Jaffa. Letters of this time testify to Lady Hester's attachment to Michael Bruce, and to her hopes of his future. 'He has not had occasion,' she writes to Crauford Bruce, 'for a dose of salts but once these three months.' Again, 'I have told him . . . he has admirable talents and the chief qualities to form a great man, but he must get rid of some foolish ideas. . . .' And about the unbusiness-like manner in which he looks after his affairs, she complains, 'To tell you the truth I am sometimes mortified that he will attend so little to my lectures. . . .' The incorrigible Lady Hester—always managing other people's lives—and poor Michael, dutifully coming up for his dose of salts!

From Jaffa they journeyed to Ramlah on their way to Jerusalem: a procession of horses, mules and eleven camels, besides seven servants and a bodyguard of janissaries provided by the Governor of Jaffa. Beyond Ramlah they began to climb the wild mountain paths of Syria, territory that had been wrested from the Sultan's

control by the dashing highwayman, Abu Ghosh, who plundered the caravans and all the Christian pilgrims that made the hazardous journey to the Holy City.

Once again, it was the force of Lady Hester's personality that won the day. For when Abu Ghosh descended upon them as they were encamping on the fringes of a remote village, he was so overwhelmed by her queenly dignity, her charming conversation and beauty that, far from robbing her, he entertained the whole party to a royal feast.

'He killed a sheep for us, gave us corn for our animals, and supplied all our wants.' When he further discovered that she had been a friend of Sir Sydney Smith, the hero of the siege of Acre and a man highly esteemed by the Arabs for his bravery, Abu Ghosh honoured her by mounting guard over her tents in person.

And so to Jerusalem, a visit to the Governor there and on to Bethlehem, with Abu Ghosh protecting them again on the return journey. And lavish gifts to those who had been kind and to those who threatened danger.

Stories of her personal courage and wealth—it was, of course, Crauford Bruce's wealth, spread throughout the land, until it seemed that she could travel anywhere and among the wildest people in the world, with impunity.

This is not to say there were not dangers, nor that Lady Hester was unaware of them. In a land where 'above 40,000 Arabs are now at war with each other,' danger abounded. When Michael Bruce shortly leaves her for a while to go to Aleppo, Lady Hester writes to his father that she has provided him 'with a very superior Dragoman'. For his protection, she says, 'It will be necessary he should take at least twenty men' and adds, 'The Dragoman and janissary have my positive orders to take the greatest care of him'—and who, one wonders, would dare disobey these!

Meanwhile, intrepid and indefatigable, Lady Hester

sets out, full of new plans, for Acre and the ancient ports of Tyre and Sidon. And still with her is that faithful plump little maid, Mrs. Fry, who never got over the horrors of rats and fleas and the dirt, and whose insularity, even as she watched her mistress going with the years more and more 'native', was never for a moment shaken—dear, homely Mrs. Fry, ever turning those absurd foreign names, like Mustapha, or Philippaki, into the comprehensible English, 'Master Far' and 'Philip Parker'.

At Sidon, Lady Hester was on the borders of the Druse country, which she had planned to inspect. It was a land of snow-capped mountains and rich fertile valleys and its men-folk had magnificent blue eyes and practised strange religious rites and, as Lady Hester proved, ate raw meat.

The Emir Bechir lived in the Druse capital, Deir El Kamman, in a sixty-roomed palace whose splendour was 'beyond description'. He was a convert to Christianity, but his cruelty was far-famed. He had put out the eyes of his three nephews, and had cut off the hands of the artist who had painted the ceiling of the great courtyard to the palace.

Lady Hester's interest in the Emir was more than matched by the Emir's curiosity concerning 'the fabulous princess'. Lady Hester writes from Sidon: 'The King of the Druses has had a palace prepared for us . . . he has sent down 12 camels, 25 mules and four horses and six guards. . . .' He in fact entertained her regally, not realising that in time she would become his bitter enemy.

Her success with the Arabs was not shared equally by Michael Bruce. Bruce found himself gradually being pushed into the background. Often he had to ride at the rear of the procession, to share a more humble roof with Dr. Meryon while Lady Hester claimed whatever privileges were extended. In her love of the limelight

she brooked no rivals, not even her beloved Michael. The two men thrown together more and more frequently got on one another's nerves. Michael Bruce finally decided to leave for Aleppo, and Lady Hester was happy at the prospect of making a triumphant entry into Damascus alone.

Dr. Meryon's position had altered too, so that, except occasionally to bleed her, he was becoming less the physician and more the explorer-messenger, frequently going ahead of the party to make suitable arrangements for her Ladyship's subsequent arrival. Lady Hester was learning to concoct her own medicines; her 'black doses' became notorious and, on one sad occasion, fatal. Dr. Meryon had now gone off to Damascus where the Pasha had made it known that Lady Hester would be cordially received by him.

The party set out, travelling slowly across rough country, over arid hills and hot shimmering plains and camping at night by some cold mountain spring. And always the dust and the heat and the insects, and the sudden moments of coolness beneath a clump of trees; then out again into the fiery white sunlight, to the smell of hot leather and camel-dung.

She had been warned by the Pasha's messenger not to enter the city unveiled. Her reaction to this was characteristic and admirable. She not only ignored the warning but on being taken to the house that had been set aside for her in the Christian quarter, she took an immediate dislike to its humble surroundings and sent an imperious note to the Pasha, demanding a palace in the best part of the city. After some hesitation, the Pasha complied.

Her fame had gone before her. Now as she rode unveiled in the streets and through the bazaars, the dust was laid along her path, as a mark of honour, and the people rose to greet her. Hundreds would gather outside her house to watch her mount her horse. She writes: 'I

ride about here in men's clothes . . . sometimes followed by 2,000 people to my own door. The people call out, there goes the Queen, and that is all!

As in all the other Eastern cities, she was fêted and honoured. There were sumptuous and extravagant feasts; receptions in cool marble courtyards; the endless serving of coffee and sherberts; the costly exchange of presents. But perhaps at last these were beginning to pall. Certainly the fantastic expenses her journeys incurred were causing Crauford Bruce a good deal of concern.

However, the supreme goal lay ahead, and Lady Hester was determined to reach it. This was the desert city of Palmyra. No European woman had entered its gates and of the handful of men who had dared the perilous journey, the famous Swiss explorer, Burckhardt, had been stripped naked and beaten by Bedouin robbers. Only a few months before, Lady Hester had met Mr. North—later Lord Guilford—who had turned back from his expedition to Palmyra when he could find no guides nor escort prepared to risk crossing a desert over which the fiercest Arab tribes were at war. Firmans—passports of safe-conduct—were valueless, for the conduct of the inhabitants lay beyond the control of the Sublime Porte.

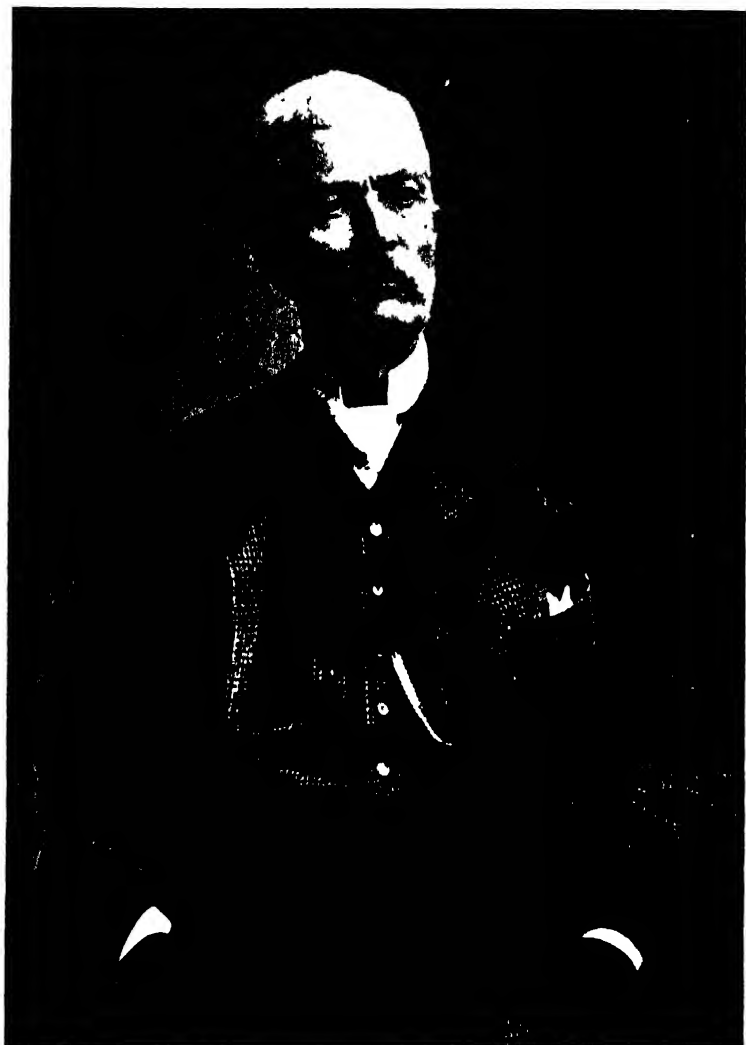
In Damascus she was strongly advised to give up the project, but Palmyra was a challenge and the very dangers excited her.

Having himself failed to dissuade her from the undertaking, the Pasha of Damascus with some misgiving offered her a powerful escort. At the same time she heard rumours that the Pasha was not popular among Bedouin Arabs and that his escort of troops might provoke them, and, as if to confirm all this, Lady Hester received a visit from the great military leader, Moulai Ismael. 'If,' she was advised, 'she would place herself under



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LADY HESTER STANHOPE



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the protection of the Bedouins, and rely upon their honour, they would pledge themselves for conducting her safely thither and back.'

Through the influence of Moulai Ismael, Lady Hester secured the protection of Mahanna el Fadel, a formidable chieftain, and could boast in a letter that she would go to Palmyra, not afraid of one tribe of Bedouin or another but 'as a friend of them all'.

Nevertheless, a great deal of jealousy had flared up between the Arabs concerning her journey, and while they intrigued, Michael Bruce, with Mr. Barker, the consul at Aleppo, returned to Damascus. They too put every possible obstacle in her path until finally the expedition was postponed and the party retired to Hama for the winter. There, on the fringes of the great wilderness she had set her heart on crossing, Lady Hester made a trial run, as it were, in order, as she said, to discover whether the great Arab chief, and those under him, could be trusted.

She set off into the desert accompanied by a single Bedouin guide. 'I took no precautions whatever,' she writes, 'in requiring hostages, etc., as is the custom. On the contrary, I disarmed my attendants, much against their inclination, and one of my men ran away from fright.' Lady Hester possessed a shrewd judgement of persons and situations.

This preliminary expedition succeeded beyond all expectation. 'I went,' she writes to General Oakes, 'with the great chief Mahanna el Fadel (who commands 40,000 men) into the desert for a week, and marched three days with their encampment. I was treated with the greatest respect and hospitality and it was perhaps the most curious sight I ever saw: horses and mares fed upon camels' milk, Arabs living on little else, except a little rice, and sometimes a sort of bread: the space around me covered with living things, 1,000 camels

coming to water from one tribe only; the old poets from the banks of the Euphrates, singing the praises and the feats of ancient heroes; children quite naked; women with lips dyed light blue and their nails red, and hands all over flowers and designs of different kinds; a chief who is obeyed like a great king—starvation and pride so mixed, that I could not have had an idea of it.' And then she adds jubilantly, 'And I am the Queen with them all.'

The beginning of the year 1813 was one of the severest ever known. Snow lay deep along the streets of Hama and snow-storms lashed the desert. Poor Dr. Meryon was sent into the wastes to attend the Emir Mahanna, and Mrs. Fry fell ill with pleurisy. And then when the snow melted, the Orontes river overflowed and the houses became half-submerged. But with the spring the waters receded; the trees blossomed in the hot sun, and on March 20th, 1813, Lady Hester started for Palmyra.

There was a time many centuries before when Palmyra was ruled over by a beautiful and masculine queen whose name was Zenobia. With the help of her commander-in-chief, Zabda, she extended the Palmyrène empire even as far as Egypt, and the Romans, disquieted by the growth of such powerful forces, sent an expedition to crush them. At the battle of Emsa, about A.D. 272, when she personally led her troops, Zenobia was defeated and the city of Palmyra besieged. Finally the queen was captured and taken to Rome and the once flourishing city destroyed.

As Lady Hester began her journey, stories of this gallant queen loomed large in her thoughts.

A dozen Bedouin chieftains formed her bodyguard as the caravan, consisting of some 70 camels, launched out into the desert wastes. It must have been a fine sight: the sheiks with their long lances plumed with ostrich feathers, their colourful headgear and their splendid

horses, all bright and animated against the background of tawny sand. As the procession advanced Bedouin from other tribes joined it, and to beguile the time mock-battles were fought and war-cries rang out across the parched stillness and a great trail of yellow dust spread behind them. During the day, under the protection of Naser, the Emir Mahanna's son, there was no anxiety, but at nightfall a great plunder would begin, and only Lady Hester herself, guarded outside her tent by a powerful black slave armed with a battle-axe, remained free of the thieving hands of the Bedouin.

On the fifth day, Lady Hester, accordingly, summoned Naser to her tent. He refused to come; he was the son of a prince: it was for her to go to him. Lady Hester decided to treat his petulance with complete indifference. But the next night panic ran through the camp. Some mares had been stolen, and it was rumoured that a hostile tribe was lying in wait for them. At this moment of tension, Naser and his followers suddenly disappeared into the desert, leaving Lady Hester and her party alone. Undaunted, Lady Hester armed those few who had remained with her in the camp and positioned them all to resist attack. Shortly afterwards Naser returned. He had ridden out, he said, to take the enemy by surprise and they had duly fled at his approach.

Clearly, however, it had been a trick to test Lady Hester's morale and to bring home to her how utterly she was in his hands. But Lady Hester's morale had never been higher and she had shown how indifferent she was to his protection: Naser, to do him justice, graciously submitted to one whose courage more than equalled his own.

When, after journeying for a week, Lady Hester came at last to Palmyra she received a royal welcome. There was a great pounding of horses' hooves and the beating of drums and the rumble of guns as the Palmyrenes swept

out to greet her and to entertain her with a mock attack and defence of the sprawling caravan. There below and before her lay the Valley of the Tombs and the majestic sweep of the colonnade that terminated dramatically in Zenobia's triumphal arch rising above the great waste of ruined columns and scattered stones.

Lady Hester's clear, penetrating blue eyes swept in triumph over the whole city, the ancient city of Tadmor that had been built by Solomon, and had resounded to the tread of Roman legions, and stood now in lonely devastation in the heart of the tawny, waterless desert.

As she advanced up through the long colonnade, beautiful girls in delicate robes and long white veils and with garlands in their hands stood motionless on pedestals on either side of her, only to leap down and dance by her side, as the procession passed. With music and dancing she was brought to the gates of the Temple where bearded elders recited odes in her honour while 'all the spectators joined in the chorus'. And then a wreath was placed upon her head. It was a supreme moment for her—a moment in which her mind must have flashed to a day long ago when she had visited the insane fortune-teller, Richard Brothers in his padded cell in Bedlam. He had said: 'You will be crowned queen of the East.' And lo! the crown was on her head.

On the fourth day, Naser induced Lady Hester to return. Spies from enemy tribes had been caught on the fringes of the city, and indeed on the journey back they were on several occasions pursued by powerful Bedouin bands. As they rode into Hama, with relief but in triumph, crowds came out to welcome Lady Hester and marvel that she had successfully accomplished what no pasha in Turkey with all his troops dared undertake.

Throughout the expedition Michael Bruce had been kept firmly in the background. Perhaps his relationship with Lady Hester was becoming a trifle strained; her

advice, her lectures, a little wearisome and repetitive. In any case his father was seriously ill, and towards the end of the year, 1813, they parted.

Lady Hester wintered at Latakia. It was an unhappy time for her. Reaction to the excitement of the summer months made her restless, and life without Michael Bruce seemed empty. Up and down Syria the plague was raging. For a time she thought seriously of returning to England too, yet somehow she felt she had become too steeped in the East to leave it. And then, weak after all her exertions and depressed, she had her problems taken out of her hands: she was herself stricken with the plague.

It was the turning point of her life. She never really recovered from the plague. It attacked her lungs and her brain. From now on, although her feverish energy drove her on to the most curious enterprises, she became a sojourner rather than a traveller. For her home she chose the disused Monastery of Mar Elias built on a lonely hill-top above Sidon. Here she turned her back on Europe and European customs, and 'conforms herself entirely to the modes of life of the Orientals'. Of necessity she lived simply. There was no longer the comfortable security of Crauford Bruce's bank balance. When she travelled, it was with the economy and in the habit of a humble pilgrim. Gradually too her mind became more and more absorbed in the strange occult sciences, in astrology, in the intrigues, in the inherent mysteries of the East.

By the spring of 1814 she was safely settled at Mar Elias. Her vitality returned to her and soon she was searching about, rather desperately, for some excuse for action. She found it in an old manuscript that had once belonged to some Italian monks. From it she learned that a store of treasure lay hidden beneath the ruins of Ascalon. That it was really there she never for a

moment doubted. She wrote to the Sublime Porte asking permission and the means to excavate, emphasising that the treasure would be handed over to them, that she herself wanted nothing but the honour of conducting the expedition which the British Government, she had decided, would pay for. It did not occur to her that, since the British Government were to get nothing out of it except a vague prestige, they might be reluctant to do so.

Meanwhile she sought for a cooler place to live, and wrote to her neighbour, the Emir of Bechir, for a house in the shady village of Meshurushy. The Emir, deep in intrigue, and not anxious to have 'the Queen of the Arabs' meddling in his affairs, prevaricated, whereupon Lady Hester informed him that if he failed to accommodate her she would pitch her tents on the mountain. A house was quickly found for her.

From here she set out on a mule for the famous ruins at Baalbek, parading her poverty in the hope of embarrassing the British Government for whom, since the death of her uncle, she had felt nothing but contempt. She visited the Cedars of Lebanon and the Monastery of Mar Anthony, where she rode into the courtyard on a she-ass, insisting that with the Sultan's firmans, no place could be barred to her. The poor, outraged monks were powerless to stop her.

It seems a pity that she should have acted so imperiously towards such kindly people, for her prestige remained, everywhere she went, as high as ever.

With her mule and her humble robes she was still honoured by every local pasha in the land, and the crowds still lined the streets to greet her.

When finally she returned to Mar Elias, having already spent more of her money than she could afford to, she was met by an Envoy from the Sublime Porte. Not only had permission for the expedition to Ascalon been

granted, she was given firmans from the Sultan, which invested her with the highest possible authority. Tents were provided, one of which had been used by the Princess of Wales on her journey to Jerusalem, and in the procession that set out in March there were water-carriers and torch-bearers and tent-pitchers, and for Lady Hester herself a scarlet palanquin topped with golden balls. Her days of triumph had returned in all their colourful splendour; but they were brief—like the last bright flares of sunset. There was no treasure found beneath the ruins of Ascalon, the place where Herod was born, only snakes and lizards crawling among the tufted stones and one huge headless statue of a Roman warrior that she insisted on having destroyed, to prove to the Porte her motives were entirely disinterested.

Her failure, far from lowering her in the eyes of the Syrians, enhanced her prestige—for had not the Sublime Porte given every assistance to her enterprise? Nevertheless, Lady Hester could not conceal her disappointment.

Perhaps it was this underlying sense of frustration that led to what might be called 'the Boutin affair'—one of the most remarkable and appalling incidents in Lady Hester's chequered career.

Colonel Boutin was a French officer in Napoleon's army. Lady Hester had met him in Cairo where he had been on some secret mission. They had liked one another and later he had been one of her rare guests at Mar Elias. Here he told Lady Hester of a journey he was about to make into the unexplored Ansary mountains whose inhabitants were religious fanatics with no love for European Christians. Colonel Boutin set out on his suicidal adventure and did not return. When it was clear to Lady Hester that the French Government intended to do nothing to enquire into his disappearance she sent a spy into the mountains to discover whether or not Colonel Boutin was alive. He returned with the news

that the colonel had been murdered, naming both the village where the murder had occurred and the tribe that had committed it. Neither the French Consul nor the Pasha of Acre was prepared to stir up trouble in a difficult part of the country. Lady Hester, however, was made of sterner stuff. On hearing this, she set off in all her splendid robes to Acre where she demanded an audience with the pasha. The pasha loaded her with gifts; explained to her the difficulties of the terrain; flattered her, but refused to comply with her demands. But when she threatened to communicate with the Sublime Porte, the pasha remembered the powers with which, on her expedition to Ascalon, she had been invested, and gave way. A powerful force, led by the Governor of Tripoli and virtually under her command, set out. Fifty-two villages were destroyed; three hundred Ansarays were killed, and the death of Colonel Boutin most bloodily avenged. The French Government wrote and thanked her.

Once again she made plans for returning to England, for holidaying among the Greek islands, and then she heard that the British Government had refused to defray the expenses of the expedition to Ascalon, and very soon she found herself in the hands of the money-lenders of Damascus and Beirut. About this time, too, Dr. Meiyon who had suffered all her ladyship's whims and vagaries with the utmost patience, began to long for home. In the year 1817, he left her, and Lady Hester moved to a remote and even lonelier monastery near the village of Djoun.

Here she was to spend the last eighteen years of her life: a figure of terrible loneliness and pathos, and yet the stories of these last long years are perhaps the most wonderful of all, for during her wanderings she had established herself in the eyes of all whom she met and of all who had known of her as a woman of great power.

and it was now that she was to exercise that power with telling effect in causes that were wholly admirable.

Miss Williams had taken the place of Mrs. Fry, who had returned to England with Dr. Meryon. It must have been an exacting time for the poor woman, for Lady Hester's temper had grown steadily worse with the years and in true Oriental style she beat her servants and worked herself up, as her father had done, into ungovernable passions. These fits of rage, her curious beliefs—she had a deformed mare she believed would carry the Messiah to Jerusalem—and then all those visits from magicians: these led people to doubt her sanity, though years later men like the writer, Kinglake, and the French poet, Lamartine, testified to the fine quality of her mind.

During her first years at Djoun, there was terrible famine in the land, and Lady Hester took in all those who were near to starvation, feeding them out of her own slender resources. She asked Dr. Meryon to come back to her. The entire incident is wrapped in mystery. For, having arrived, he returned home again almost immediately. No reason is given. Dr. Meryon merely records: 'I found that her ladyship had in the meanwhile completely familiarised herself with the usages of the East, conducting her establishment entirely in a Turkish manner, and adopting even much of the medical empiricism. Under these circumstances, and at her own suggestion I again bade her adieu, as I then believed, for the last time.' By 'medical empiricism,' no doubt, the doctor was thinking of the notorious 'black doses' she administered to pasha and peasant alike. It was a 'black dose' that killed poor Miss Williams. The doctor must too have been a little alarmed to find that 'she smoked the Chibouque'.

In 1823 Lady Hester received the news that her brother James had committed suicide after the death of his wife.

On top of this came the more serious news that revolution had broken out in Lebanon. The insurgents, in defeat, suffered cruelly at the hands of the victorious Emir Bechir, and those who could, fled to Djoun and Lady Hester's protection. Lady Hester, with only her reputation standing between her refugees and terrible massacre, boldly denounced the Emir as 'a dog and a monster'. It was sublime defiance, and the Emir, not daring to attack the monastery or lay hands on his incorrigible enemy, was forced to give orders whereby, according to Lady Hester, 'men, women and children shall be cut in a thousand pieces who render me the smallest service'.

Now from her poverty-stricken fortress with its hordes of unpaid and often sick servants, Lady Hester wrote and invited Dr. Meryon to return again. She was no longer a young woman and her health was poor. Dr. Meryon came with a wife, whom Lady Hester refused to acknowledge, and who was put in a cottage in the village while the doctor would remain up all night listening to Lady Hester's interminable reminiscences.

In 1832, Mehemet Ali began his campaign to subdue Syria. The invading armies from Egypt, led by Ibrahim Pasha, devastated the country. Many fled to Djoun, to the all-embracing protection of the indomitable Englishwoman. 'She alone, in all Syria and Palestine, was able to keep her territory, her "one hillock", free from Egyptian tyranny.' Her courage never failed her, and at moments of extreme danger she slept with a dagger under her pillow.

By now she had become an old woman. Her body had wasted away and was convulsed with coughing. Most of her teeth had gone and she was prone to terrible fits of weeping and despair. And yet the occasional visitor whom she allowed to see her continued to marvel at her intellect and her wonderful powers of conversation.

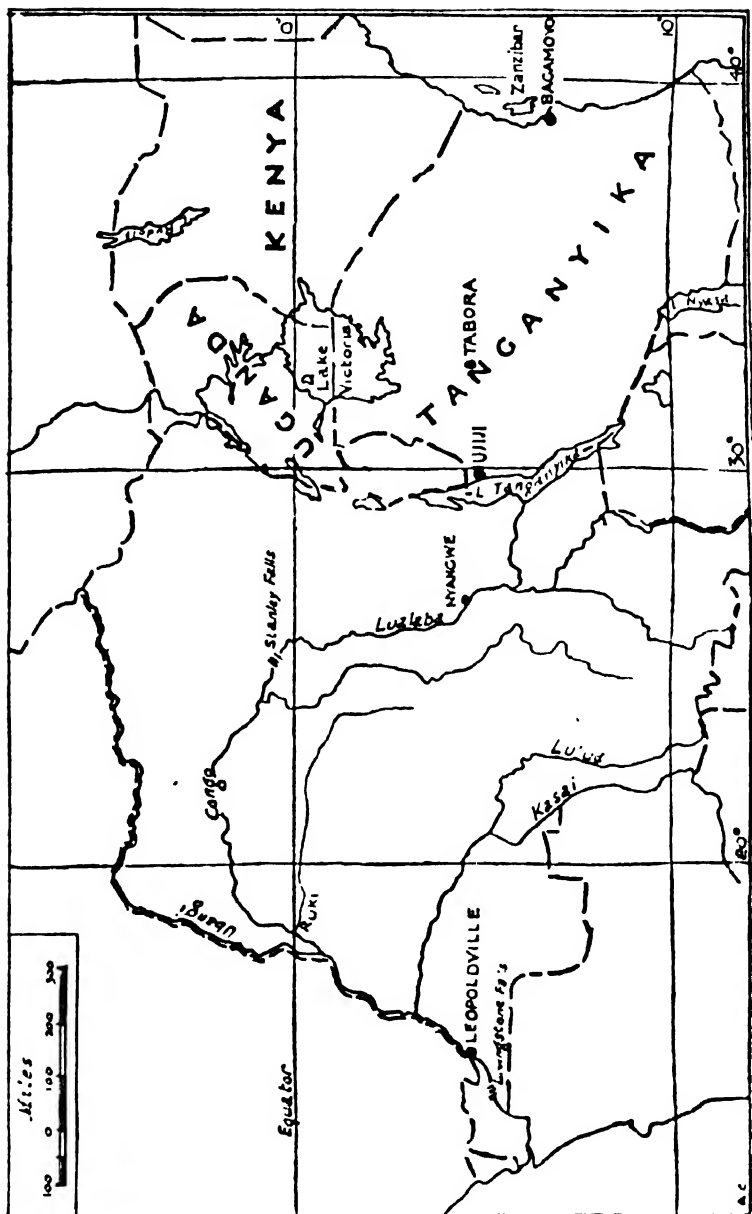
Sometimes she remained in bed for weeks on end, the floor of her bedroom a mass of tobacco and ashes and the room itself heavy with smoke and dust and grey with cobwebs.

Sick in mind and physically exhausted, Lady Hester spent her last ebbing strength ranting against her servants, who stole from her because they were unpaid and unfed and who avoided her because she was wild and beat them; and the money-lenders began to move in demanding what she could not give them. One, a Turk named Homsy, to whom Lady Hester owed £1,000, appealed to the Consul-General in Alexandria, who in turn wrote to the Foreign Office. Lord Palmerston, the new Secretary of State, made it clear that if her debts were not paid he would ask Queen Victoria to stop her pension. It was a harsh and unworthy attitude to take, and Lady Hester, sick at heart, summoned up her strength and wrote a proud and noble letter to the Queen, and a particularly vituperous one to Palmerston. Finally, rather than suffer the ignominy of losing her pension, she resigned it, threatening at the same time to wall herself up in her home until justice was done. But justice was never done, for England had forgotten the Pitts and the gallant aristocrat with Pitt blood in her veins. There was no outcry, only a few letters in *The Times* from faithful friends deploring the action of the Secretary of State. True to her threat, Lady Hester entombed herself in her fortress-home at Djoun, walling the place up till only one opening was left, large enough to let in a single beast. She advised Dr. Meryon to leave her.

She was alone now save for a handful of servants, and cut off from the world outside. Her life, that had been so complex and violent and restless, was reduced to the basic simplicities. She was left with nothing: there was nothing then to lose and little to win except perhaps for the first time in her life a sense of peace. And this she

found. Her last letters are strangely relaxed. She writes to Dr. Meryon about a hyena that leapt the wall into the garden; she implores him not to reproach himself for leaving her; and rather pathetically she asks him to send her some pairs of spectacles—‘not expensive’. This was in March 1839. On June 23rd at the age of sixty-three she died.

Hearing that she was dying, the British Consul at Beirut, Mr. Moore, and an American missionary went over to see her. They arrived at night. The monastery seemed utterly deserted. When they found her she was dead. A few servants eventually crept into the room. It was hot. They decided to bury her at once, and in the dead of night the coffin, draped in a Union Jack, was taken into the garden and placed in the vault there, and Lady Hester Stanhope moved into the realms of history.



IV

HENRY M. STANLEY

(1842-1904)

STANLEY'S adventurous travelling was concentrated almost entirely in Central Africa. His three greatest journeys—finding Livingstone, tracing the course of the Congo, and rescuing Emin Pasha—led him through the most primitive country in the world, among savages, most of whom had never seen a white man, and who introduced themselves, not with handshakes but with poisoned darts.

Parts of his journals read like the worst excesses of romantic fiction. One comes across this: 'Every day we tossed two or three bodies into the deep waters of the Livingstone.' And this: 'Again and again the savages hurled themselves upon our stockade, launching spear after spear with deadly force into our camp.' And this: 'Muftah Rufiji was killed, a broad spear-blade sharp as a razor ripping nearly eight inches of his abdomen open.'

In his struggles across the Dark Continent, Stanley was harassed continually by appalling enemies: disease, in the form of typhus and smallpox; the terrain—dank, dripping forests of endless gloom and teeming with insects; cataracts and impenetrable jungle-growth; cannibals, above all, beating their war-drums in the night, and shooting their poisonous spears in their quest for human meat.

No wonder sections of the Victorian public discounted Stanley as a fraud. And yet the most eloquent commentary on the truth was the dreadful death-roll. On one trip

alone, of the 708 men who set off, only 196 returned.

Who was this extraordinary man of iron, who lives, for most of us, in that single phrase: 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume?'

Stanley's life is as dramatic and improbable as his own record of his adventures. He was born with every disadvantage: a love-child, who was baptised John Rowlands, and who never knew his father, and whose mother abandoned him in shame and fled to the larger confines of London.

The forsaken child soon became an embarrassment to various impoverished relations and was taken at the age of six to a workhouse—not far from the Welsh village of his birth—where the prison-like routine, the food and the floggings recall certain grim scenes from Dickens.

He spent nine years living like a little convict, and then one day an incident occurred which, though perhaps trivial in itself, was to have a dynamic influence on the course of his future. Some youth with a knife had disfigured the surface of a table. The tyrant, James Francis, a miner, who ruled the workhouse with birch and fist, demanded to know the culprit. No one responded. Incensed by their silence he determined to thrash every boy in the class. John Rowlands refused to unbutton his trousers for the flogging and in the fierce scuffle which followed he succeeded in kicking his tormentor in the face, and having momentarily half-blinded him began to beat him with his own birch. Then, in sudden terror of what he was doing, he rushed from the room. In panic he scaled the great wall encircling the workhouse and never looked back.

. . .

On the 17th October, 1869, a young man of twenty-eight knocked on the door of a Mr. Bennett's room in the Grand Hotel, Paris.

'Come in,' a voice said.

Mr. Bennett was in bed. 'Who are you?' he asked.

'My name is Stanley,' the young man answered.

'Ah, yes,' said Mr. Bennett. 'Sit down. I have important business on hand for you.' And then, after a pause, 'Where do you think Livingstone is?'

'I really do not know, sir.'

'Do you think he's alive?'

'He may be and he may not be.'

'Well, I think he's alive and that he can be found, and I am going to send you to find him.'

The young man stood aghast. 'What!' he said. 'Do you really think I can find Dr. Livingstone? Do you mean me to go to Central Africa?'

'Yes, I mean that you shall go and find him wherever you may hear that he is and get what news you can of him, and perhaps the old man may be in want:—take enough with you to help him should he require it. Of course you will act according to your own plans, and do what you think best—but find Livingstone.'

The young man's imagination reeled. What of the expense? But Mr. James Gordon Bennett, jr., son of the proprietor of the *New York Herald*, was not concerned with trifles. 'Well,' he said, 'I will tell you what ; u will do. Draw a thousand pounds now; and when you have gone through that draw another thousand and when that is spent draw another thousand, and when you have finished that, draw another thousand and so on—but find Livingstone.'

This was the turning point in the life of Henry Morton Stanley. And one might well ask how it came about that a frightened waif, called John Rowlands, fleeing from a workhouse in Wales, should, fourteen years later, have become Henry Stanley and be standing in a bedroom of a Parisian hotel with instructions to find the greatest

missionary of the century in the darkest of the world's great continents.

. . .

When John Rowlands jumped clear of his prison walls, he made his way, ragged, hungry and penniless, to the home of his grandfather, a Welsh farmer of considerable means. The old man listened to his grandson's tale of woe in silence. At the end of it, he pointed his pipe towards the door and told him to get out. None of his relations, so it seemed, was prepared to help him. And the boy was near despair when a distant cousin, Moses Owen, took pity on him and told him he could help him at the village school where he was master.

For a few months all seemed well, but soon it became apparent that his uncle and aunt were finding the boy a financial burden, and when Aunt Mary went to visit some relatives in Liverpool, she took John with her and left him there, hoping that her relations would find work for him.

He became an errand-boy, carting meat from the butcher's shop down to the docks. Here, the great ships intrigued him, and a time came when he had to deliver a note to the captain of the *Windermere*, due to sail in three days' time for New Orleans at the mouth of the Mississippi.

The Captain seemed a friendly man, and apparently needed a cabin-boy. The cabin looked a magnificent affair: the unsuspecting youth accepted the job with enthusiasm. A few days later he was on the high seas, but not as a cabin-boy: he was scrubbing the decks under the ferocious eye of the second mate. The boy was wretchedly sea-sick; he was shocked by the crudities of the tough, coarse-mouthed sailors; he was bullied by the mates. When, after six nightmare weeks at sea, they docked at New Orleans, John Rowlands, clutching his

sole possession—a Bible—jumped ship, and, for the second time in his young life, found himself on the run.

In his search for a job in the hot, alien, albeit exciting, streets of New Orleans, John Rowlands one day came upon an elderly man sitting with a newspaper outside a store. Encouraged by a kindly face, John Rowlands asked the man if he wanted a boy. It was an odd question, but, as it turned out, a poignant one. Henry Morton Stanley had always wanted a boy. But he was childless. Perhaps, then, it was the irony of the remark that quickened his interest. The result was that he and his wife took the boy into their home.

This happy association did not last.

Henry Morton Stanley was a prosperous merchant, who spent much of his time travelling. He was away on business when his wife fell ill. John Rowlands had by now become devoted to her; he looked after her lovingly as she lay sick, and when she died he was heartbroken. In his distress he set off to find his benefactor. During his unsuccessful search Henry Morton Stanley returned home. Here he was told with what devotion the boy had cared for his wife, and touched by this, he, in his turn, sought out the boy. Finally they met. John Rowlands wept for joy, and Stanley, too, found himself deeply moved.

They talked together for a long time and then the man who had wanted a boy and whose wife was now dead pronounced gravely: 'The long and short of it is, as you are wholly unclaimed, without a parent, relation or sponsor, I promise to take you for my son and to fit you for a mercantile career, and in the future you are to bear my name, Henry Stanley.'

For two happy years foster-father and son travelled on business up and down the Mississippi, among the cottonfields and the plane trees of the lazy southland; where the banjos strummed and the negro spirituals were born—the land of the 'mockin' bird' and 'Steamboat

Bill'; a hot, colourful land of planters, merchants, gamblers and murderers. It was, in fact, on a Mississippi river-boat that Henry Stanley, senior, was one night attacked in his cabin and only saved from the knife by the arrival of his adopted son.

Eventually young Henry Stanley was sent to work in a store in Arkansas; but it was not long before he had quarrelled with his employer over the unjust treatment of the negroes. The year was 1861. The American Civil War had broken out, and he joined the Confederate army. The years that followed were hard and bitter for a man not yet twenty-one.

One wishes that he had seen more of the kindly figure that had protected him and given some shape to his twisted life. But Henry Stanley, senior, was constantly travelling and spent much of his time in the West Indies. Unaccountably the two drifted apart, and when years later Stanley set out in search of him, it was only to learn that he was dead.

Without the wise and loving influence of his foster-father Stanley's life reverted to chaos. He fought in the fearful and bloody battle of Shiloh, was taken prisoner, and endured the appalling privations of Camp Douglas where men rotted and died of dysentery and fever.

In desperation he turned traitor and joined the Federal artillery; but by now he was really ill and the army discharged him. Weak and sick, he set off once again to find work. After days of tramping the roads, he met a farmer who allowed him to sleep the night in his barn. The next morning he was discovered among the hay, unconscious. The farmer took him in and nursed him, and it was not long before he had recovered sufficiently to help with the harvest and to earn enough money to set sail for England.

His reception at Denbigh, the village where he was born, was utterly chilling. His mother, still shamed by the

circumstances of his conception, ordered him to leave the village and never come back.

His mother's rejection of him shocked and hurt him profoundly. He was never quite the same man again. The capacity for joy seems to have gone out of him, and he practised an emotional self-restraint which soon developed into a cold and critical reserve.

He returned to America. From there he sailed to Cuba to find his father, only to learn that he was dead. This was the worst moment of all. One's heart goes out to him: misfortune had hit him hard and often, not least in his personal relationships.

But whatever his circumstances, the dramatic moment was always at hand. Restless and unhappy, Stanley went to sea again. One night, off Barcelona, he was shipwrecked. The crew were drowned but Stanley swam naked to the shore. He, himself, has little to say about the incident. Men of his calibre evidently took shipwrecks in their stride. And, as if to emphasise his utter indifference to danger, he joined the United States navy.

On board the warship, *Minnesota*, during a naval engagement with the Confederate forces, Stanley wrote accounts of the battle. His articles were published, and his lively mind was quick to exploit his talents as a writer. He deserted the navy and took to journalism. Mr. Farwell in his biography of Stanley sums up: 'Thus, before he was 24 years old, Stanley had established a long series of desertions: he had run away from school, he had jumped his ship at New Orleans, he had become a traitor to the Confederate cause by changing sides, and he had deserted the U.S. navy in time of war. It was a strange beginning for the man who was to establish his reputation as one who never quit, who carried out his assignments in the face of all odds and dangers.'

It soon became evident that in his first and highly successful excursion into the world of journalism there

was no question of 'beginners' luck'. He covered events accurately and vividly, and ever-increasing demands were made upon his talents by an ever-widening circle of American newspapers.

His quest for 'copy' took him among the Red Indians; it led him back to Europe and Asia Minor; it involved him in a skirmish with brigands, and it finally landed him in a Turkish jail.

Reports of his exploits began to excite the powerful *New York Herald*, and in 1867 he was sent, now as a member of its staff, to cover the British expedition against Emperor Theodore of Abyssinia. Here, he was the first to send back an account of the fall of Magdala, a battle which successfully concluded the punitive British campaign. This distinction was further emphasised by the fact that when other journalists tried to despatch their reports, they discovered the telegraphic system had broken down, so that Stanley's account became exclusive—a scoop, that deeply impressed Mr. Gordon Bennett, sr., the *New York Herald's* proprietor.

He now received a roving commission. He went to Spain. It was about this time that he received, too, a telegram from Mr. Gordon Bennett, jr., urgently summoning him to Paris. He had no idea why.

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The expedition to find Livingstone somewhere in the heart of Africa was organised in Zanzibar, from where it sailed in dhows to Bagamoyo on the African coast. By March 21st, 1871, it was advancing into the interior. Henry Stanley must have been at this moment a proud and anxious man: proud that he had successfully set the expedition in motion: anxious because he had now to prove himself a leader of men. He looked young and ingenuous for the part. He stood only five feet seven inches, and his body had not yet taken on that sturdiness,

nor his face that look of resolution and manliness, that later gave him such a powerful presence.

Under him were 191 men, two of whom were white. Of the rest 23 were armed askaris or soldiers and 157 were pagazis, whose job was to carry the six tons of baggage and equipment, much of which consisted of cloth and beads—the chief forms of currency in the territories they were to traverse. The whole expedition bristled with fire-arms.

They made tortuous progress. Rain had swollen the rivers. Some took five or six hours to cross; others were too turbulent to wade into, and timber must be sawn and a bridge built, and herds of hippopotamuses driven off. When Stanley first fired his Winchester at them, he noticed with dismay the bullet 'did not more than slightly tap them, causing about as much injury as a boy's sling'. He might, in a word, have been firing peanuts.

Along the steamy jungle tracks branches of thorns ripped open their clothes and tore at their flesh, and the stifling air was poisoned by the sickening smell of rotting vegetation. When eventually their path broke out into the stones and boulders of the savannah, Stanley had already determined to avoid the African jungle 'save under the most urgent necessity'. They advanced: but each day, the dark continent stiffened its resistance. The tsetse-fly attacked the donkeys and horses, and one after another they began to fall by the wayside; storms transformed whole valleys into swamps and then the heat would unladen itself until temperatures rose to 128° F. The appalling humidity bred disease—dysentery, small-pox, every kind of tropical fever. Farquhar, one of the two other white men on the expedition, died of elephantiasis, and for a while Stanley himself was struck down with malaria. The exhausted pagazis, too, were prey to fever, and those that deserted had to be searched for, and, if found, chained together, like the long columns

of slaves they sometimes passed, being driven by their Arab captors to the coast.

When one imagines the expedition struggling for thirty miles through feet of swampy water, stumbling at times and becoming submerged as the hidden ground fell away in deep holes, it is hardly surprising that Stanley had recourse to the whip to keep his men on the move.

Then there were the insects. Besides the malarial mosquito and the tsetse-fly, they were plagued by armies of huge and vicious ants; earwigs invaded their tents in thousands; there were yellow-headed wasps with the sting of a scorpion, 'enormous beetles, as large as full grown mice', and giant centipedes.

These circumstances—and their attendant horrors—remained more or less constant. There was little one could do to combat them: they were there to be endured. But other, more nagging problems, began to arise, that finally tested Stanley's powers of command to the utmost. Territory, sometimes small in extent, sometimes vast, through which they travelled, was ruled over by native chiefs, to whom it was necessary to pay tributes. These tributes, or *honga*, varied in amount according to the prestige, the audacity or the greed of the chief concerned. Often territory was subdivided—one imagines somewhat hastily and conveniently at times—among a chief's sons or brothers, to whom Stanley and what must have seemed to them his opulent caravan, became a rich source of revenue. Such men were, furthermore, dangerous to provoke, and often difficult to assuage.

Through a mixture of intimidation and concession, Stanley at first travelled reasonably cheaply, but towards the end of his search for Livingstone, demands became extortionate, and the situation of his depleted expedition hazardous in the extreme.

Meanwhile Stanley had reached Tabora in Unyamwebe, a kind of half-way house along the track to Ujiji.

Tabora was the Arabs' headquarters, and at the time of Stanley's arrival, the Arabs were being embarrassed by a native chief, named Mirambo.

Mirambo appears to have been a savage of some talents. With a powerful robber force, he had taken to waylaying Arab caravans, and demanding fabulous payment in the form of cloth, guns and gunpowder for the privilege of passing through territory he had himself only seized from weaker tribes.

This was the position when Stanley met the Arabs at Tabora. He saw at once that Mirambo's aggression might be as inconvenient to himself as it was proving to the Arabs, so he decided to join them in the war they were planning to crush him. Unfortunately at this moment Stanley was struck down again with severe fever, so that he was unable to bring his powerful mind to bear on the tactics of the campaign. The Arab forces were ambushed and massacred; Tabora itself was threatened, and its inhabitants fled, leaving the fever-stricken Stanley in a nearby village alone. Only Selim, his little Arab-boy servant, remained behind to face Mirambo, and when Stanley, touched by the boy's loyalty, asked him why he too had not deserted him, he answered naïvely: 'Oh, sir, I was afraid you would whip me.'

Stanley soon recovered sufficiently to gather round him his own dwindling forces, and decided to make a detour south to avoid Mirambo and maintain his search for Livingstone. By the time Mirambo had reached Tabora and burnt it to the ground Stanley had moved on. Nevertheless fear of Mirambo was playing havoc with his men. Only fifty-four had been willing to follow Stanley and risk Mirambo's displeasure, and of those twenty deserted during the first day's march. Shaw, Stanley's one remaining white man, was among the sick and discontented. He stayed behind, and died shortly afterwards. By trebling their pay, Stanley managed to keep the

rest moving. They staggered on, hiding in the gloom of the great forests, and haunted by fear and sickness, and heavy with fatigue. 'It was a frequent thing with us,' Stanley writes of this time, 'to discover a skeleton or a skull on the roadside. Almost every day we saw one, sometimes two, of these relics of dead, and forgotten humanity'—victims, more often than not, of Mirambo's terrorists, known as the Wa-Ruga-Ruga.

After the darkness, the terror and the weariness it was a relief to come once more to the shimmering hot plains where herds of buffalo and zebra moved; where there was meat and water. For three days they rested. All seemed peaceful, and then suddenly, after Stanley had given orders to resume the march, and the caravan had lumbered slowly off with Stanley himself in the rear driving the stragglers forward, the caravan stopped. The men who had faithfully followed him had gone far enough. Stanley found himself looking down the barrel of the giant Asmani's shotgun, and became aware that behind the ant-hills and rocks his own men, fully armed, were in revolt against him. They would go no farther. Here was food in plenty; ahead lurked nothing but the unknown, and perhaps starvation.

In this crisis Stanley acted with icy self-control. He walked boldly towards two of the men whose rifles were aimed at him and, with his own rifle raised, ordered them to drop their weapons. They hesitated, then obeyed. He now turned to face Asmani. As he did so he became aware of someone coming up behind him. He swung round and with the butt of his rifle struck the man in the stomach, knocking him down. Once again he faced the leader of the revolt. For a moment it seemed a question of who would fire first. Suddenly, however, one of Stanley's more loyal followers darted forward and knocked Asmani's gun from his hands. The rest, now leaderless, looked on, unwilling to take on the

responsibility of killing their master. The mutiny was quelled. Stanley's courage had not for a moment wavered, and when subsequently his men swore loyalty to him, his prestige had never stood higher.

The expedition continued on its way. One of the donkeys was attacked by a black leopard; another, fording a river, was seized by a crocodile and after gallant resistance was dragged under. Most exciting of all, there was a rumour of a white man coming to Ujiji, and Stanley, hardly daring to believe Livingstone was alive and within a few hundred miles of him, redoubled his efforts to move quickly.

But it was now, when the expedition most needed to hurry, that 'financial' difficulties threatened to hold Stanley up indefinitely. For a whole week in early November they were contained in the districts of Uhha and Urinza among chieftains whose extravagant demands for honga were made with that air of confidence that is backed by strong armed force. No sooner had Stanley met the crippling demands of one than he was faced with others, equally bold, equally heavy. For days he wrangled with these powerful chieftains, until finally when his supplies had dwindled dangerously and his prize at Ujiji seemed likely through delay to escape him, he decided to creep away into the jungle, and thus elude his extortioners.

It was an exciting detour. They slipped off under cover of night by threes and fours. They dared not light fires and the long grasses and the thorn bushes cut cruelly into their flesh. They dared not even pitch tents for the time it would take, if they were surprised, to dismantle them. Then one night, from a hundred miles away, they heard the thundering surf of the great falls, and they staggered on, weary and fever-ridden, towards Ujiji, now only fifty miles away.

The terrain never gave up its bitter resistance to their

advance. One of the worst experiences of all occurred about this time when the party were skilfully guided across a great stretch of bog. When a donkey sheered off the track, it took six men to prevent it from being sucked in to the ghastly ooze.

They came at last to Ujiji. Stanley's men advanced, bearing the flag of the United States, and as Stanley walked down 'a living avenue of people' he saw a white man. He noticed that 'he was pale and that he looked weary and wan, that he had grey whiskers and moustache'. Stanley wrote: 'I would have to run to him, only I was a coward in the presence of such a mob . . . so I did what moral cowardice and false pride suggested was the best thing—walked deliberately to him, took off my hat, and said, "Dr. Livingstone, I presume?"'

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On his return to the civilised world, Stanley found himself a famous man. There were banquets in his honour at which he spoke—not very well apparently—and there were lecture tours. His book 'How I found Livingstone in Central Africa' sold prodigiously. Queen Victoria presented him with a gold snuff-box studded with diamonds. It should have been a time of happiness and triumph, but with success came enemies.

In England many public figures frankly disbelieved in his achievements, even in his claim to have found Livingstone; the letters from Livingstone to his relations were considered forgeries, and many of his purely geographical discoveries were hotly disputed. In America, rival newspapers, especially the *New York Sun*, suggested that the whole expedition was a hoax, and, what was worse, began to dig up Stanley's past. His desertions, his illegitimacy, were all brought to light and Stanley on behalf of his newspaper was told to refute them, an impossible task when almost every allegation was true.

Meanwhile he continued reporting, and was in fact in Africa when he heard the news of Livingstone's death. He was reminded again of the magnificent work Livingstone had done in Africa and of the work that was yet undone: little, for example, was known about the slave traders, and not one of the great explorers—Speke, Burton, nor Livingstone himself had discovered the course of the Lualaba river. It might join the Congo, the Niger or the Nile. No one knew. No one had dared travel beyond Nyangwe—not even the Arab slave traders. Beyond Nyangwe lay thousands of square miles of forest; thousands of miles of gloomy river banks where the cannibal tribes lived supreme and unmolested. Nyangwe, standing almost in the middle of the African continent, was the last outpost. One sees it as a face with two great bulging eyes staring in horrid fascination towards the barbaric north. Beyond Nyangwe there would be no return.

To this point Stanley and his followers came, having already circumnavigated Lake Victoria and Lake Tanganyika, remarkable achievements, but which the dramatic assault on the Congo inevitably eclipsed.

The general view of the new venture—that it was an elaborate form of suicide—was unfortunately shared by many of Stanley's own company. And if his own men were going to desert him, and some had already done so, to obtain an additional armed force to protect the expedition seemed extremely unlikely. There was, in fact, only one man capable of mustering such a force as Stanley needed—a powerful, immensely wealthy Arab, an ivory-and slave-trader, who went under the somewhat improbable name of Tippu-Tib. Colourful, brave, unscrupulous, Tippu-Tib knew Central Africa as he knew the palm of his hand; and he considered a journey beyond Nyangwe sheer madness. It was a tribute therefore to Stanley's powers of persuasion, at he finally

induced the Arab to accompany him sixty marches down the river at the head of some seven hundred followers. With such a force, and such an ally as Tippu-Tib, Stanley's own men were prepared to curb their mutinous feelings.

The great journey—for many of the thousand men, women and children who took part in it, it was to be their last—began on November 5th, 1876.

The company was too considerable for Stanley to be able to take to the river; his giant canoe, *The Lady Alice* was carried in sections, along with the vast crates of stores, and the whole trailing column kept, as far as possible, to the river bank. Soon, however, the jungle thickened; the matted undergrowth began seriously to impede their marching and as the long, disjointed column painfully hacked its way forward, the sunlight was squeezed out by the intertwining vegetation until there was nothing but a hot and breathless twilight. A fortnight of this, and Tippu-Tib's resolution began to weaken, and for a while, Stanley's iron will alone maintained any kind of order. In this time they covered less than eighty miles; finally the difficulties of carrying sections of the canoe became insurmountable, and Stanley decided to launch it on the river, thus dividing the expedition into two parts. To those who joined the crew of *The Lady Alice* it might have seemed a privilege and a blessing. The river flowed sluggishly and in silence about them. Along the banks occasional villages appeared, but the streets were empty, the huts deserted; and if there were bones and human skulls lying in the dust, they were ageless, and the river flowed comfortably between the rowers and the shore. Furthermore there was no wall of tangled trees to harbour a savage enemy. Or was the 'savage enemy', a creature that lived merely in the imagination of primitive, superstitious simpletons?

The river-party eventually stopped near the confluence

of the Ruiki and the Congo. Somewhere here the land-party would have to be ferried across the hundred yards of water. Stanley therefore set about organising a base and reconnoitring the surrounding country. Returning from such a trip in *The Lady Alice*, he heard the confusion of native war-cries and the crackle of fire-arms and as the camp-site came into view he saw the river seething with lines of hostile canoes, and the warriors manning them raining spears and arrows thick and fast upon the small body of Stanley's men holding the fortress. Without hesitation Stanley swept down towards the battle—a sturdy, determined-looking white man at the head of a roaring, bellowing crew. The time was to come, all too soon, when the whiteness of his skin would no longer charm his assailants into retreat, but on this first cannibal attack it was enough.

During his foraging up-river Stanley had commandeered a number of native canoes which, when the overland party caught up, were to serve a sad and unexpected purpose. Among the straggling, patiently-hacking members of Tippu-Tib's force, smallpox had broken out. The canoes became hospital boats, providing rest from exhaustion rather than treatment of disease, but creating at least some measure of isolation for those as yet in health. The pathetic little fleet paddled on: but the river shores were not silent now, nor deserted. Black figures, elusive and shadowy, kept pace with them; and they could hear the muffled beating of drums and chanted war-cries.

Then one morning there was a scream of agony from one of the hospital canoes. A guard collapsed with an arrow through his chest. With the sick hopelessly vulnerable in their canoes, the fleet rowed swiftly down river, landed in a clearing and hastily fortified it.

The assault on the camp lasted for nearly three days. The enemy attacked furiously and with unexpected

persistence so that Stanley could do little but protect his small base. Those who had, for reasons of sickness, been left in the boats, spent a night of hunger and terror. It was their fate, in fact, that forced Stanley into a tactical battle, that with the aid of a little luck, eventually gave him victory. In the early morning of the following day, he set off with a small force in *The Lady Alice* to reconnoitre the steaming jungle pressing along the river banks. Finding a large, deserted village that he rightly surmised belonged to his assailants, he took possession of it, fortified it and turned part of it into sick quarters. Against the savages, now further enraged by the usurpation of their homes, Stanley's men fought stoutly, without sleep and, apart from a few bananas, without food. Stanley employed his inadequate force with the touch of a master, sending out small guerilla bands to spread panic among the cannibals, and positioning his defenders with the utmost skill of economy. Superior numbers however began to take effect. The gallant defenders found themselves fighting hand-to-hand, as they battled with an enemy that surged to the very walls of the barricade. That night there was a short respite from warfare if not from vigil; but the following day further attacks were launched both from the land and the river. They were saved only by the arrival of the land force—massive in bulk but utterly ineffective in fighting power—that scared the cannibals and led to their retreat. It had been a near thing; but with that terrible iron-will, Stanley determined to go on.

His position was a difficult one. Tippu-Tib had gone as far as he would. The hostile natives were lurking on the neighbouring islands, licking their wounds, preparing for a further assault.

Stanley met these uncompromising circumstances with a brilliant stratagem. With his faithful second-lieutenant, Frank Pocock, he slipped out one night and paddled to

the islands where he stole the native canoes moored along the banks. In one master-stroke he had not only deprived a large enemy force of its means of attack but he had furnished his own means of transporting his whole company away from the land forces that had killed and wounded so many of his men.

His fleet now consisted of some twenty canoes. In an impassioned speech he called upon his men to follow him; and those he needed responded; the rest, including the sick and the dying, returned with Tippu-Tib. As the pitiful land force set off on its long and arduous trek back, and Tippu-Tib waved his farewell, a sudden gloom, fell upon the pioneers. For, in the words of a very much greater man, Stanley had nothing to offer them but 'blood, tears and sweat'.

The fleet paddled on down the river. In every skirmish, in every battle, Stanley's men had taken care to collect the weapons of the fallen. And now as the canoes skimmed the water, they presented to the hostile shores a broad protective wall of shields, above which armed guards kept an eye on enemy raiders. Soon, however, as the river widened and the banks receded till in places they were a full mile apart, these precautions became superfluous. But the war-drums went on beating through the jungle, 'telegraphing' the whereabouts of the expedition. Enemy fleets had time to prepare their attacks, before mounting them, and so long as the land remained belligerent, food supplies could not be replenished without a battle.

A crisis occurred when at one point the river perceptibly narrowed. The savages on either bank, seeing that their poisoned shafts were in striking distance of the expeditionary force, massed along the shores, as their own warriors took to their canoes and like predatory crocodiles swept from either flank into the attack. Stanley's men paddled with the frantic energy of desperate

men. As they began to lengthen their lead in the chase they became aware of a deep and terrible noise of churning water. The cataclysmal roar quickly developed into a kind of sustained thunder and the expedition found itself trapped between the first great unnavigable falls and the pursuing cannibals. Stanley had little choice. The falls were death without a fight. It was better, clearly, to die fighting.

Aware that he must force a beachhead, he engaged the enemy with the bulk of his own forces in midstream, while a raiding party, under one of his most reliable chiefs, Manwe Sera, made a surprise attack on the nearest island, landed, and quickly threw up a barricade. Behind this the main contingent eventually managed to take up positions and successfully defend themselves, though there were several dead and many wounded. The enemy were numerous, for two tribes, the Bakumu and the Baswa, had joined against the common intruder.

For Stanley, it was necessary to do more than just preserve his men. He must drive the enemy back and take his stores and equipment overland to avoid the falls and the miles of rapids, stretching beyond them. Accordingly, at the head of a small well-armed party, he set off towards the enemy villages, out-flanked their defences and burned their villages to the ground.

Stanley by this counter-stroke had taught his adversaries respect, if not submission, and he was able to continue the land operation, now in the face of more wary and less overwhelming opposition. Nevertheless, it was harrowing work: no sooner had one cataract been negotiated than another appeared; as they struggled on through the dark and difficult terrain, the cannibals kept pace with them, striking whenever an opportunity presented itself, allowing them little chance to find food, and little chance to sleep.

In view of this endless succession of cataracts, Stanley

decided to float his heavier equipment down the rapids. It was dangerous work but it brought relief to those whose burden it was to haul it overland. Among the swiftly-flowing, changing currents, between the rocks and the racing waters, the luggage was for the most part skilfully guided. But there were times when canoes were shattered or overturned; when their valuable cargo was lost, and the gallant men who steered them were drowned.

There was no peace. When the last of the seven cataracts—now known as the Stanley Falls—was safely behind them; when they had escaped one night from a boma round which a giant net had been thrown to contain them and where every jungle path leading from it had been spiked by jagged splinters of cane; and when the vast stretch of river at last ran smoothly again, there was no respite, no lessening of the violence issuing from the Congo shores. As the expedition moved deeper into the continent, the native tribes seemed to increase in numbers; their canoes became larger to meet the larger and more turbulent flow of water, and their hatred of the invader intensified. But they toiled on, month after grim month.

By March they had successfully beaten off the most militant of the Congo tribesmen, the Bangala. These terrifying warriors with their gorgeous costumes and flying headgear, their war-paint and their decorations of coiled wire, were equipped with muskets, and their battle lines constituted up to fifty or sixty canoes. Unlike the previous tribes Stanley's men had encountered and defeated, the Bangala displayed a zeal in battle that was matched by military cunning. Their onslaughts were carefully devised and cleverly executed: it was only that their ammunition consisted, not of musket balls, but of odd bits of iron that lacked penetrating power, which saved the expedition from annihilation.

The Bangala proved to be the last of the human

obstacles. But it was the river with its rapid currents, and the terrible cataracts of the Livingstone and Zinga Falls that almost broke the spirit of the expedition. In negotiating these men were drowned, including Frank Pocock, and canoes and stores were lost in great numbers.

From March 10th to April 21st, the expedition accomplished thirty-four miles, and in view of the losses, Stanley decided to lead the expedition across the mountains rather than round the deadly cataracts. Mutiny was in the air but Stanley had his way. The canoes, each several tons in weight, were taken through the passes with the help of local labour, and within a fortnight they were back on the Congo. But those who had survived were convinced that death in some form must overtake them before the journey ended. They were weary now beyond all care; their stomachs were empty; they were weak and they refused to go forward.

Stanley harangued them and threatened to go on alone. The men hesitated, turned for guidance to the wise old Safeni, the coxswain. But he too was broken. 'Let us pack up and be gone. We shall die anyway, whether we stay here or whether we travel.' They set off, some thirty of them, but Manwa Sera pursued them, and fifteen miles away met them and finally persuaded them to return. Poor Safeni—when later he heard they were on the outskirts of civilisation he went mad with joy, and with his parrot on his shoulder went running off into the jungle, shouting, 'I'm about to run all the way to the sea'—and was never heard of again.

Weak and on the point of starvation, the bedraggled party struggled on, a mere hundred and sixteen strong, of which forty were sick. Two-thirds of the expedition had perished.

On August 4th they reached Nsanda, a few miles from Embomura, where there would be white men. From Nsanda, Stanley sent a letter addressed 'to any gentle-

man who speaks English', urgently demanding supplies of food. Letters were despatched in other languages, too, but in the meantime the party pushed on fearful that in the last days, in the last hours, death from exhaustion might yet rob them of the goal that for nine hundred and ninety-nine days had lain remotely before them, insubstantial amid the realities of despair, as some mirage. However, they made those last tortuous miles. They were met by four white men on August 9th, and from then on they were nursed in the sweetness of civilisation: steamships to the mouth of the nightmare river; medicine, good food; and for Stanley endless banquets, royal receptions and waving flags.

The journey had lasted nearly three years. Over four hundred men and women had died—through starvation, disease or in battle. Stanley himself, at thirty-seven, had become almost an old man, thickset, and grey-haired; wise from experience, with features that had grown strong with the burden of anxiety, hardship and responsibility. But he had established himself irrevocably as one of the world's great explorers.

The civilised world was quick to recognise this and pay tribute to him. He was fêted wherever he went; he was honoured by kings. With his subsequent lecture tours, and the success of his book 'Through the Dark Continent', he became, for the first time in his life, financially independent: a lesser man might well have been content to sun himself in his glory. But Stanley was a visionary. Although he seemed to love his Zanzibaris, and all the natives who chose to follow him on his appalling journeys, Stanley had little time for his more civilised fellow creatures. He was too blunt, too rough for polite society; quickly bored by the frivolities of social life. He was essentially a man of action, a man with a mission. The fact that he had escaped unscathed so many perilous situations had confirmed him in his view that he had been sent by

God to carry out a special work, and he believed that the opening up and civilising of the African continent was to be his destiny.

It was not many months later, therefore, that with the support of Leopold II, King of the Belgians, Stanley was setting off once again, this time as head of the *Comité d'Etude du Haut Congo*, for Central Africa.

The work Stanley did laid the foundations of what became the Belgian Congo, one of the most lucrative and efficiently run colonies of all time. He was there for over five years, supervising the building of stations up the river, of roads linking them, and he established friendly relations with tribes that not many years before had sought to annihilate him. With the influx of traders and missionaries, slave-traffic began to diminish and the savages to forego their fearful cannibalism. These were five of his greatest years. But the marathon work that Stanley had accomplished in Central Africa had helped to make the Dark Continent less dark, and as the darkness began to lift, the eyes of Europe turned towards it hungrily.

But Great Britain's interest in Africa had for years focused on the north, on Egypt and the Sudan, where the Khedive of Egypt ruled under British control. The great wilderness of the Sudan was administered by various governors, the most famous of whom was General Gordon.

When the terrible dervishes, under their leader, Mohammed Ahmed, rose against their Anglo-Egyptian masters, and took Khartoum and murdered Gordon, there was a tremendous outcry in England against Gladstone and his Government, and when it was learnt that a lone Governor was still holding out in the Sudan, public opinion without investigating the situation demanded that he should be relieved.

Stanley's last great expedition was to rescue Emin

Pasha. He went, not as a general at the head of an army, but as an explorer who knew Africa and who was best fitted to penetrate the unknown country north-east of the Congo, and thus smuggle the Emin out of his province of Equatoria in the southern extremities of the Sudan.

If this was not the most dramatic of Stanley's adventures, it was certainly the most epic; and in terms of physical suffering and deaths quite the most disastrous. Furthermore to its end there was a ludicrous and ironic twist.

Although the men who were sponsoring the expedition, and men in high places—everyone, in fact, that mattered—favoured reaching Emin Pasha from the east, Stanley contended that the quickest and best route was via the Congo. The transport, he argued, could go by steamer up the river; the Zanzibaris, who comprised the bulk of his force, were less likely to desert far away from their homes; and there was the evidence of two previous attempts from the east that had failed in their objective. It need hardly be said that the self-willed—and with the years, overbearing—Stanley got his way.

He arrived at Zanzibar early in the year 1887, collected a force of some 600 men, some of whom had been his loyal followers on previous expeditions, and with 62 Sudanese soldiers, the old Arab trader, Tippu-Tib (and his thirty-five wives) and nine other white men—a force of about 800—Stanley sailed for the Congo via Cape Town.

The first battle was not anticipated for some months but it took place soon after the ship had left port. The Zanzibaris fell out with the Sudanese soldiers and immediately the decks became a screaming battle-ground. Stanley finally waded in with his white officers and broke up the fighting, whereupon Surgeon Paine found himself prematurely busy patching up the wounded.

The expedition reached the mouth of the Congo without further excitement. Stanley's objective was a village called Yambuya. From this point he calculated that only a march of a few hundred miles lay between the relief force and Lake Albert where Emin Pasha might reasonably be contacted.

In the light of what lay ahead, the journey to Yambuya was relatively easy. Shortage of transport on the river vexed Stanley, and never at his best with white men, he had words with a number of them; there was a shortage of food too. Some of the men were in fact so undernourished that Stanley established a camp at Bolobo where one of the white men, Mr. Bonny, was given orders to fatten them up—as if they were a bunch of turkeys. There were also the inevitable desertions.

By the time Stanley had set off into the interior with some four hundred men, the image of a desperately besieged Emin ever in his mind, the expedition had been split into several forces. One remained at Bolobo, another at Leopoldville; Tippu-Tib had gone to the Stanley Falls, where he would send supplies of men to help carry the loads of ivory that Emin was rumoured to possess and wish to bring out with him; the rearguard, under the command of Major Barttelot, was to stay at Yambuya and organise supplies for the advance force now making its dash to rescue Emin Pasha. When Major Barttelot was sufficiently equipped with men and arms he was to follow Stanley. This part of the plan misfired and was a factor in the chaos that followed.

The Ituri forest, into which Stanley plunged, occupies 25,000 square miles of Central Africa. Here the pigmies live and the gorilla; the trees are vast and the vegetation itself rises twenty feet above the ground. Because the forest stands in perpetual twilight, sunless, damp and sticky, it is a breeding ground of all that is horrific. Gigantic, biting ants in terrifying and ruthless armies

devour everything that crosses their path; all that creeps and crawls and bites and stings lives among the fungi and the creepers and the great spidery ferns.

One knows so well the inconvenience, even the misery of being soaked to the skin, when the prospect of a bath, a cosy fire, is all one can wish for. For Stanley and his men the physical miseries were always there and there were no prospects. Heat and wet brought rashes and sores on the skin, and ulcers formed that would not heal but penetrated deeply into the flesh, sometimes to the bone. Dysentery and malaria played havoc with the force, and their diet of plantains and bananas left them too weak to resist the onslaught of disease.

Men fell exhausted among the rotting vegetation and were left to rot. Sometimes they marched two, perhaps three miles a day, and where they found the river smooth, Stanley put the sick into canoes, laboriously carried through the forest, splitting the party as he had done on previous expeditions.

The weeks and months passed. The fascinated world outside waited for news, believing the expedition had already been exterminated. The expedition was being exterminated, but slowly and painfully through disease. When, as was inevitable, the pigmies attacked them with their poisoned arrows, the wounded died in paroxysms of pain. Lieutenant Stairs was only saved from a similar fate by the courage of Surgeon Parke who sucked out the poison from Stair's chest before it had time to reach the blood-stream. Coupled, therefore, with the long, unrelenting physical privations was the constant fear of a hideous death from an enemy sometimes heard, often sensed but, among the dark, thick foliage, never seen.

There were times when the land party and those on the river lost one another; tedious searching took place time and strength were wasted. Camps had to be built to accommodate the growing numbers of sick, and with

so many at the point of starvation food, rather than Emin Pasha, became the primary object of the expedition.

Many of the men deserted, some struggling back to base and safety, dumping their loads of ammunition that Stanley was trying to get to Emin Pasha. So much in fact was lost, there were so many desertions, that finally Stanley, having recaptured three deserters together, had one shot, as an example to the rest. This was a desperate and unsavoury measure, but Stanley admitted in his diary that he was on the brink of despair. Nothing came nearer than the Ituri forest to breaking his powerful will.

After five terrible months they emerged into the light of day. It seemed that the worst was over. But on the grassland savage tribes banded together and attacked the intruders. While Stanley hastily organised stockades and engaged the enemy he quickly realised that all the ammunition so precious to the besieged Emin would shortly be expended on his own battles. Sick at heart, he decided to retreat to the forest, and somewhere there build a fort.

Fort Bodo proved safe against the pigmies, but the insects multiplied there and rats overran the place, feeding off the putrefying flesh of the sick and the dying.

There was no news of Major Barttelot, and fearing he had lost his way, Stanley sent out a force to meet him, and leaving the sick in the charge of Captain Nelson, set off himself once more to try to reach Lake Albert. They had entered the great forest in June 1887. They had come out of it in December. Now in April 1888 Stanley was successfully making friends of the tribes that had previously attacked him on the grassland. And as the party neared the lake, messages went ahead to inform Emin Pasha of Stanley's imminent arrival.

The two men met on April 20th. For Stanley it was a curious unbelievable nightmare, a ghastly kind of joke. Emin Pasha was meticulously dressed, fit and apparently

quite untroubled by the situation in the Sudan where he had made the neighbouring tribes formidable allies against the power of Mohammed Ahmed. He entertained Stanley lavishly on his steamer. When he explained that it might be preferable to stay with his people in Equatoria after all and not return with the expedition, Stanley's cup of disbelief was overflowing.

Emin Pasha's point of view nevertheless deserves respect. To leave those he governed to the mercies of corrupt officials might, he felt, result in the weakening of the system of local alliances he had so carefully built up, and ultimately bring about the massacre of his people. The alternative—to lead them out with him—seemed to Stanley, in view of the thousands involved, impracticable.

Meanwhile Stanley was becoming increasingly exasperated. His responsibilities were twofold: to rescue Emin Pasha, and to take care of the members of the expedition. As Emin Pasha remained unable to come to a decision, Stanley decided to leave him and go off in search of Major Barttelot and the rearguard about whom nothing had been heard for a very long time.

Many months passed and many men died struggling once more through the great forests, before Stanley met Bonny at the village of Banalya, not far from Yam' iya. And here Stanley was told of the disintegration of the force he had left behind for the purpose of bringing up reinforcements. Most of them were dead. Major Barttelot had been murdered; and of those alive, few were free of disease or from the appalling effects of starvation. It was a story perhaps of poor leadership, certainly of inexperience of tropical Africa and of the management of its inhabitants. Major Barttelot was a soldier; he was not an explorer. It is not surprising that he should have been under the circumstances a failure, that Africa should have defeated him. The fate of the rearguard and its leader merely underlines the greatness of Stanley.

But undaunted by the tragic disintegration of over half his original force, Stanley at once began to reorganise the expedition, and particularly to raise its morale, preparatory to advancing through the forests with an additional supply of ammunition and gunpowder for Emin Pasha.

Stanley's third trek through the Ituri forest differs little from his previous ones. The long, straggling column was attacked more boldly by the pigmies; food supplies did not last, and berries and grubs and roots were eaten; and once again men began to die.

Months later Stanley and Emin Pasha met again. Emin Pasha, after some maddening prevarication, finally decided to return in company with some 500 followers to the coast with Stanley.

Emin Pasha, vague, indecisive, kindly, intent for the most part on collecting butterflies and rare flowers; Stanley, resolute, clear-headed, blunt, humourless but with a keen sense of duty—the two men had nothing in common, not even mutual admiration. And after the expedition had returned in triumph to the civilised world, and after the cheering had died down and the hundreds of dead men forgotten, the news reached Stanley in 1892 that Emin Pasha had been murdered in Africa. He could have felt little genuine regret.

By 1892, although his days as an explorer were over, he had already embarked on a very different kind of adventure, which was to bring him the happiness that had somehow always eluded him: he became engaged to, and subsequently married Dorothy Tennant, the daughter of an erstwhile member of Parliament. The driving force, that had hardened Stanley and made him such a successful explorer, and that was perhaps a kind of substitute for the emotions of tenderness and love about which in his loveless life he knew so very little, that driving force relented. He wrote books. With his wife he travelled

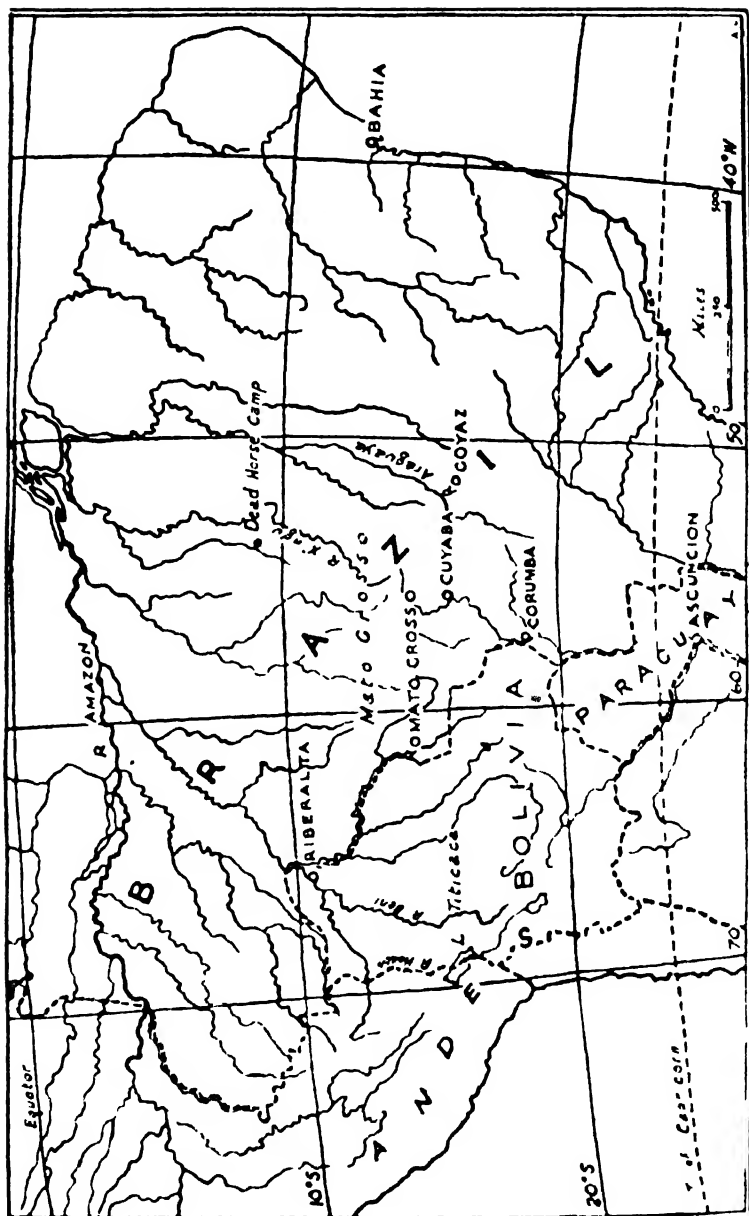
extensively: he gave countless lectures, and he talked and talked, with Gladstone, with Sir Richard Burton, with King Leopold of the Belgians—about Africa. He even returned to Africa and toured its southern states. Africa was in his blood-stream, literally and figuratively. Sometimes he was seized with awful pains and attacks of malaria, legacies of his past; and sometimes he grew terribly restless and longed to go back to the African scenes of his earlier years.

It was undoubtedly on account of these feelings that his wife persuaded him to stand for parliament. It seemed to her that as an M.P. he would have every opportunity to voice his views on Africa before a body of men with powers to carry out the plans that were always seething in his brain.

So the last years of his life became full of excitement. He was elected to parliament in 1895; he became the father of a boy; he found a house in Surrey and spent much of his time turning the garden into a miniature Africa, with a stream that his wife named 'the Congo' and a pond that became 'Stanley's pool'. He went on writing about Africa and went on talking about Africa—not now about plans for developing it, but of his adventures there. He also received a knighthood—and with this public recognition of his great services to his country, with the love that he found in an understanding wife and with a son on whom he could bestow his affection, with his books and his friends and, above all, with his memories, Stanley passed, in unexpected peace the few years that were yet left to him.

But in 1904, at the age of 63, he was struck down by an attack of pleurisy, from which he did not recover.

A funeral service was held in Westminster Abbey, and the nation honoured and mourned the passing of the great explorer, Bula Mutari, breaker of rocks.



V

COLONEL P. H. FAWCETT

(1867-1925?)

FAWCETT'S childhood was not apparently a very happy one; it was 'devoid of parental affection'. This made him introspective and lonely, though it taught him a measure of self-reliance that was to stand him in good stead during his later adventures. His imagination, a powerful factor in his make-up and one that helped to shape his destiny, was fed in these early days on the romantic histories of Mexico and Peru, of Spanish conquest and the ancient civilisation of the Incas. But he was not just a dreamer. He was an athlete, an accomplished cricketer and a man of action.

At nineteen he became a subaltern in the Royal Artillery and was sent to Ceylon where he spent several years, became deeply interested in Buddhism, and where he met the girl who five years later was to become his wife. Pleasant as the army was, promotion was slow and he could see his future stretching out in long years of monotony, that to 'a lone wolf', he felt would be intolerable. He had a brief interlude of secret service work in North Africa, and then, with the promise of interesting assignments later on, he went to Malta to study surveying. He was next in Hong Kong, returned to Ceylon where his son, Jack, was born, and in 1906 found himself stationed in Ireland. The congenial work of boundary surveying, for which he was now qualified and which the army had promised him, was beginning to seem a mere pipe-dream, when unexpectedly he was

approached by the President of the Royal Geographical Society about surveying a sector of the Brazilian-Bolivian frontier on behalf of the Bolivian Government.

He accepted the job, and subsequently devoted his life to exploring the South American continent.

The record of his adventures is a formidable one.

Fawcett's first task was to map out the areas where Peru, Bolivia and Brazil meet. The land involved was rich in rubber trees, and with the rubber boom at its height, disputes between the three countries had brought them to the brink of war. It was a particularly inaccessible part of the world, cut off in the west by the Andes, and elsewhere by jungle, swamp and river, much of which was unexplored. The jungle spread clean across the continent to the Atlantic Ocean, and the rivers flowed south to join the Paraguay or north to become tributaries of the Amazon. Apart from its remoteness, the country was steamy hot and wet, a pleasure-ground of evil insects and disease where for choice only the wild Indians lived. Those who made their way there were seeking means (mostly imaginary) of getting rich quick, or hoped to find (and did) in this 'green hell' a useful escape from the law.

Physically and by temperament Fawcett was well suited to his job. His stamina was phenomenal right up to the last days. He seems to have been almost miraculously immune from disease. He was impatient, but having an enquiring mind he rarely got depressed. His astute eye and his sense of the dramatic made him a fascinating recorder of events. Despite the horrors he so lovingly describes, it is clear, too, he was quite fearless. He possessed, in short, all the essential qualities to be found in great explorers.

His journey into the rubber country began in earnest when he left Lake Titicaca—the highest navigable lake in the world—and descended the eastern slopes of the

Andes along the Mapiri trail. At night he put up at posadas—inns, that were cold, dirty and insanitary, and round which clung the most awful tales. There was one, whose landlord had knifed some forty travellers before finally being brought to justice; at another, a mystery surrounded the deaths of those who slept there. Eventually on official investigation, the murderer was discovered in the thatched roof—an apazaucá spider, bigger than a plate, that lowered itself at night on to the sleeping body below and bit it. The dead bodies were invariably black with poison.

From Mapiri Fawcett continued his journey in whirlwind fashion by balsa down the Tipuani river, where whirlpools were negotiated at high speed and the utmost skill was required to avoid the jutting snags and sudden rapids. On his long river journey to Riberalta, the centre of the rubber business, Fawcett picked up a great deal of useful information. He learnt to identify the various species of rattlesnake, and the deadly bushmaster; where to dig up turtles' eggs buried in the sand; he found that monkey flesh tasted 'rather pleasant', and discovered, lurking in the waters, electric eels that could paralyse a man with a single sting. Most of the talk at the settlements he visited was of the Indians and Fawcett felt distressed by the mutual hate and fear that existed between the so-called civilised people of the rubber estates and the 'savages'. Stories of brutality on both sides were verified when he reached Riberalta.

Riberalta was, by all accounts, a hellish place indeed. 'It is no exaggeration that nine out of every ten of Riberalta's inhabitants suffered from diseases of one kind or another.'

Boredom, disease, fear-- these weakened the morale of the foreigners-- the gringos -- and all but the very best doffed the thin veneer of good behaviour and acted like beasts. They drank, and in their dissipation they turned

on the objects of their fear and hatred—the Indians. The Indians became the hunters' sport. They were tracked in the jungle and shot ruthlessly. There were firms with their hired slavers who brought the Indians back in chained gangs to work on the plantations. Being beyond the arm of the law, men in authority could dispense 'justice' in any way they pleased. They used the whip. Sometimes a thousand lashes were inflicted, and still the victim would survive. Fawcett observed with astonishment how impervious the Indians were to this kind of punishment. But the white men suffered too. For their employers gave credit liberally, and once in debt a man was snared, and unable to strike at those above him he struck savagely at those in his charge. The years of the rubber boom were bitter and cruel and bestial.

For the next eighteen months, Fawcett explored the streams of Eastern Bolivia, mapping their courses from source to where across the border in Brazil they became broad and navigable rivers. Whenever possible he spent the nights at the various barracas—literally sheds—where his hosts were German, Bolivian or English managers of the local rubber concerns. These villages told the same tale of undernourishment, disease, drunkenness and cruelty.

It is significant that through all his travelling, Fawcett never failed to take note of the supernatural, the legendary—all that touched on the mystic. There was an old half-caste woman in the forest of the Beni river, who, Fawcett records, was 'a natural clairvoyante', herbalist, fortune-teller and distiller of love-potions. With her crystal globe and her witchery she amassed a considerable fortune and was treated with the utmost reverence. There were stories that clearly fascinated and impressed him of expeditions deep into Indian country; disastrous expeditions whose members were massacred by white Indians with poisoned arrows.

But the uncivilised Indian despite the brutalities

attributed to him appeared to be a shy creature, occasionally raiding a settlement to avenge some white man's act of aggression, but for the most part stealing ever deeper into the trackless jungle. From time to time Fawcett found his footprints along the sandbanks or a trail that suddenly stopped before a wall of jungle, only—as he discovered later—to continue at some point a considerable distance away. These cunningly contrived 'escape routes' invariably mystified pursuers; but they spiced Fawcett's curiosity; were these elusive 'savages' so dangerous? He longed to know.

For the time being, however, his knowledge of them remained second-hand. This could not be said of the wild life of the country. Here his experiences appear to have been prolific and at times unenviably intimate. Jaguars prowled outside his camps with unexpected regularity, and he records how the natives hunted them on horseback with lassos. Then on one occasion opening his sleeping-bag he felt something 'hairy and revolting' scuttling up his arm and over his neck. It was an apazauca spider that 'clung tenaciously' to his hand. One would like to know more. But the incident closes as sharply as it opened. It was black, but what was its size? What did he do with it? Did it escape or did he kill it? Why did not bite him? But there, one cannot have it both ways: when on the river Acre, he and his men killed an anaconda, they did measure it. It was sixty-two feet, and in London, Fawcett strongly resented being told he was a liar.

When Fawcett finally returned to Riberalta, he learnt that the Bolivian Government had run into financial difficulties and that further expeditions were to be postponed. Fawcett returned to England at the end of 1907.

But England, despite the sweetness of a family reunion, seemed terribly tame. In his mind he saw again the forests of the Acre. 'Before me was the slow moving river like molten gold in the glow of sunset. The menacing dark-

green walls of the forest closed in to imprison me, and I knew that 600 miles of cruel wilderness lay between me and civilisation. I was where the only law recognised was that of the whip and the gun, and the only escape the oblivion of drunkenness.'

Fawcett's return to South America found him once again in the service of the Bolivian Government. Part of the Bolivian-Brazilian frontier followed the river Verde, but, not having been explored, its course on the maps laid down by the Commission of 1873 was mere guesswork. Its assumed source Fawcett proved to be erroneous, and when his observations had been verified, Bolivia found itself enriched by some 1,200 square miles of territory.

On this expedition Fawcett set off from Buenos Aires by steamboat up the Parana to Asuncion, capital of Paraguay, where during the war against Brazil a favourite sport of the soldiery had been apparently to tie prisoners to a stake in the river, make a gash in the body below the water-line and to watch the piranhas—small fish with sharp teeth and a partiality for blood—eat the victim alive.

Poling up the Verde, Fawcett and his assistants found plenty of game: monkeys, otters, anacondas, turtles, and in the water numerous sting-rays, easy to spear and good to eat. But in the hills they were soon among the rapids: the moment had come to abandon the boat and proceed on foot. To hide their traces from the Indians, whose attitude towards a white man was a matter of conjecture, they sank the boat in a pool and buried what they could not take with them in two separate metal cases, one of which contained £60 of gold. For years afterwards rumours of treasure on the Verde excited the people in the area—much to Fawcett's amusement.

The stream now had a bitter flavour and fish that were so plentiful on the lower reaches became scarce; game was scarce too. They were troubled by tiny bees that

penetrated their clothes, and having to cut their way through the undergrowth, they were constantly stumbling on wasps' nests. Rubber trees grew in profusion but by now the expedition was far beyond the outposts of the rubber-pickers. They were six days from base when the food supply of the peons ran out, so that Fawcett and his two companions were obliged to share their own dwindling rations with their careless bearers.

Then quite suddenly they were without food. There is a simplicity in Fawcett's account of these days, which is both moving and dramatic. Certain that food must come their way, he determined to press on up-stream. On September 25th a turkey was spotted but escaped. On the 30th they found a bees' nest, and suffered in consequence acute pains in the stomach, for the honey had fomented. On October 2nd, one of the two dogs (and Fawcett resolutely refused to kill these) came upon a bird's nest and they ate the tiny eggs. Now among unscalable cliffs, above which towered the Ricardo Franco Hills, Fawcett looked desperately for a short cut back to civilisation. The peons were disarmed—for fear of mutiny. The whole party grew so weak that it was difficult to keep a foothold, and voices sounded remote and small, for the deafness of famine was upon them. Expeditions had perished in just such circumstances. Fawcett had risked the lives of his men to achieve his objective; he was equally determined to lead them back to safety.

From time to time they saw Indian fires, and for a while contact with the savages, friendly or hostile, seemed their only hope of survival. But the Indians, whether they were aware of the little starving expedition or not, remained tantalisingly beyond its grasp. The peons now began to lose their will to live, and Fawcett was compelled to beat them into activity, for like birds they would creep away and lie down to die.

On October 13th, Fawcett prayed for deliverance, and

on the same day he shot a deer. The expedition was saved, and by the 19th reached the fringes of civilisation.

Although the true source of the Verde was, many years later, proved to be south-west of the position Fawcett had believed it to be, his brilliant work was widely acclaimed, and further work of a similar nature was offered him. Promise of new assignments, despite the hazards they involved, led Fawcett to retire from the army. He returned to England in 1910 and stayed there long enough to secure the services of two N.C.O.s of the Rifle Regiment, Corporals Costin and Leigh.

The new expedition was to establish a sector of the Bolivian-Peruvian frontier, and this necessitated the exploration of the little-known Heath River. Previous attempts to go up the Heath had been thwarted by Indians. Poisoned arrows had claimed a number of victims.

It is the case with the 'savage' all over the world: once you can arouse his curiosity, you can ward off any evil intentions he may be harbouring against you, for an indefinite length of time. It may be a wrist-watch, a cigarette-lighter, or if you are nimble-fingered, merely a piece of string: he is simple-minded, and like a child easily amused. So long as he has something to play with he is unlikely to kill you. His instinct, his fear of the unfamiliar, tells him to destroy you on sight: the problem, therefore, is to convince him, in some way, that you are more entertaining alive than dead.

Fawcett understood all this only too well. He chose, not a wrist-watch or a cigarette-lighter but an accordion. His party was some days up the river, when rounding a bend they came upon an Indian encampment and were received by a hail of arrows. These they managed to avoid and quickly sought the protection of the opposite bank, Fawcett having given orders to his men not to shoot under any circumstances. Crouched among the protective vegetation, Fawcett, much to everyone's surprise,

called upon one of his men to play his accordion. The rest were forced to sing. They sang all the old songs that men used to sing in pubs on a Saturday night. For a time the whizz of arrows swelled the choruses, but soon these ceased, and brown faces began to peer through the foliage.

It was a triumph of good sense, and before long Fawcett was swimming across the river to meet the chief, and strong brown arms were assisting him up the bank.

The Guarayos proved friendly and helpful, producing considerable quantities of fish which they caught by throwing an explosive sap into the water that paralyses the fish long enough for them to be collected as they float, stunned, on the surface.

They made friends with other tribes, too, so that food was not the problem it had been on previous expeditions. At the source they struck out overland, coming at last to the lonely rubber stations--Marte, San Carlos, Astillero, places of filth and tyranny where the few inhabitants lived in a perpetual state of semi-starvation. It was at San Carlos that Fawcett came upon earth-eaters. Earth-eating was a habit brought on by disease, and led to a swelling of the stomach and an uncomfortable death.

It was on the Heath, too, that Fawcett first experienced attacks by Vampire bats, which, he says, 'never fail to locate a camp, and at night any exposed part of your person is attacked--in fact, they will sometimes gnaw through the mosquito-net to get at you'.

With one sector of the Bolivian-Peruvian frontier successfully surveyed, Fawcett was soon off on another job, which took him up into the Andes mountains to Lake Titicaca and down once again into the steaming jungles below. Then work suddenly came to a stop. War had broken out in Europe. Fawcett returned to England, and for his fine services on the Western Front he was awarded the D.S.O.

In 1920, Fawcett returned to Brazil. His work now was to be of a very different nature. He had set his heart on discovering an ancient civilisation in the great central plateau of Brazil. There was considerable evidence to support his beliefs in a lost world, and nothing that could positively disprove them. For the interior of Matto Grosso, although inhabited, as far as anyone knew, by Indians, was utterly unknown country, waterless in the dry season and inaccessible in the wet.

Fawcett had been nursing this romantic and somewhat queer notion as far back as 1908 when he heard at Ascuncion of a cave near Villa Rica where 'curious drawings and inscriptions in an unknown language are to be seen'. This started a train of thought, 'in which scraps of information and stories of ancient traditions picked up from the Indians, rubber-pickers and wandering white men seemed to fit together, forming a pattern with a growing meaning'.

Then there was the image, curiously inscribed, that Sir Rider Haggard had given him from Brazil. This stone image, Fawcett claimed, had life. To hold it in one's hand was to feel as if 'an electric current were flowing up one's arm'. This sensation was so strong that some people were forced to lay the image down. The British Museum having failed to throw any light on the origin of the stone, Fawcett determined to probe into its secrets through psychometry - a somewhat dubious science, which, however, appealed to the strong sense of the mystic that was clearly part of Fawcett's make-up. In complete darkness the psychometrist took hold of the image, and saw 'an irregularly shaped continent stretching from the north coast of Africa across to South America'. There were mountains, and a volcano looking 'as though about to erupt'. All round was 'prolific' vegetation. More details followed: of the people, 'very dark complexioned though not negroid'; of temples

'partly hewn from the faces of the cliffs'. Moving in and out of these 'elaborate' temples were priests in procession. Then the scene changes. The volcano erupts violently. The inhabitants flee from the crumbling city; the priests hastily bury their sacred images. A voice cries: 'See the fate of the presumptuous. . . . The judgement of Atlanta will be the fate of all who presume to deific power.' The psychometrist could not give the exact date of the catastrophe but asserted that 'it was long prior to the rise of Egypt'.

Whatever misgivings Fawcett may have entertained regarding this strange, telepathic communication, they were rapidly dispelled when he came upon a remarkable document that still lies in the archives at Rio de Janeiro. It was the log of a Portuguese expedition that had set off in 1743 in search of the lost mines of Muribeca, the secret of whose whereabouts had perished a century earlier.

The leader of the party, a native of Minas Gevaes, whose name has not been preserved, set off northwards with five companions, a number of negro slaves and a troop of Indians. They knew little of land navigation and wandered hopelessly and ever deeper into the unknown Central Plateau. They lived on whatever game the country offered, and it was perhaps because the party was small it managed to survive. After much fruitless journeying through bush and swamp they came suddenly in sight of a jagged wall of mountains. As they approached at sunset the quartz in the rocks sparkled, so that to the excited travellers the whole aspect seemed to be a blaze of fabulous gems. The mountain sides rose sheer before them and there seemed no way up them. As they struggled over boulders and negotiated crevices, they were constantly harassed by the presence of rattiesnakes. Then one of the party stumbled upon a narrow cleft between precipitous rocks. The rest followed him, till some hours later they reached the top, and there on the

flat land before them stood the ruins of an immense city. The spectacle awed them. Great arches still towered above the square, and huge blocks of black stone were strewn about the main street. There were the remains of two-storeyed houses, and in the centre of the square a great statue of a man, hand on hip, pointing towards the north. Much that was engraved on the stone was noted down.

At night, the black stonework had a terrifying, eerie quality; footsteps reverberated; from the half-ruined temples, their roofs and columns choked with creeper, millions of bats emerged. None of the party slept within the city, but returned to it in daylight from their camp.

Beyond the city were traces of once cultivated fields, now covered with coarse grass and flowers. There were also numerous mine-shafts, and among the rubble they picked up a few silver and gold coins. It was clear that somewhere amid the devastation vast treasures lay, perhaps in the caves, hewn out of the cliffs, whose entrances were sealed by gigantic slabs of stone.

A scouting-party, sent out to explore the river, found gold and caught sight of a canoe paddled by two white Indians. 'Vast riches, it seemed, lay within their grasp, but it would need a larger, better equipped force if they were to exploit their discovery. The party, therefore, set off in an easterly direction towards the Atlantic coast. The log was despatched by Indian runner to the Viceroy of Bahia, and though survivors of the expedition were rumoured to have reached the coast, nothing definite was ever heard of them again. The document alone survived.

In this document - with its wealth of convincing detail, so much of which tallies with that of other South American civilisations, unknown to the members of the Portuguese expedition Fawcett believed implicitly. Others were more cautious, and many outright sceptical. Fawcett was determined to find the lost city. As a

Founder's Medallist of the Royal Geographical Society, he propounded his theory and disclosed in general terms his intentions to a respectful audience, but financial assistance from England was not forthcoming. It was not until the British Ambassador in Brazil, Sir Ralph Paget, had interceded with the President that the Brazilian Government finally consented to subsidise in part the new expedition.

Difficulties in obtaining suitable companions for the journey occupied much of Fawcett's time. Neither from England nor from Rio de Janeiro could he get anyone remotely eligible, and anxious to be on the move, he finally took on a six foot five Australian, 'Butch' Reilly.

Reilly claimed to be a V.C. and to own 20,000 acres of farmland 'down under'. He was also a prize-fighter, a sailor and a fine horseman. On the surface he seemed indeed an ideal henchman. A third member of the party was to join them at Cuyaba, in place of two Brazilian officers who had been promised Fawcett, but who for financial reasons were unable to make the journey. By train, and then by steamer, the two men reached Corumba in Western Brazil and continued by launch as far as Cuyaba, once the noisy centre of the gold industry.

Here Fawcett met the third member of the expedition, knowledge of whom has remained curiously obscure. He was known only as 'Felipe'. He was a 'gringo'—i.e., a foreigner—an ornithologist; a young man 'who bubbled over with good intentions'.

In view of his somewhat unpromising assistants, Fawcett, it is clear, was already preparing to modify his plans, which were to travel north into the unexplored jungle; to live among the Indians during the rains and to come out via one of the big rivers, probably either the Xingu, flowing into the Amazon or the Francisco, both of which would bring him to the Atlantic coast.

The party left Cuyaba on mules and Reilly, the great

bronco-buster, having experienced unexpected difficulties in mounting his mule in the first place, fell off four times during the first two days, developed a mysterious illness on the third and set off alone back to Cuyaba on the fourth. So then there were two.

Encouraged, on the trail, by reports of a 'city', east of the Xingu, where there were temples, and in the houses strange 'stars' to light them, which never went out, Fawcett and his young companion trekked on northwards through grassland and scrub, occasionally making vast detours to avoid the treacherous bogs. For six weeks they headed north towards the territory of the Morecos, particularly savage creatures who lived in caves and were by habit nocturnal. Insects worried them day and night, especially the wasps, hideous monsters, sometimes an inch and a half in length.

At the end of the sixth week, one of the oxen lay down and refused to go on. Felipe's horse got drowned. From that moment when the young man was forced to travel on foot, his morale began to weaken. Pains mostly imaginery--made him morose, till Fawcett felt obliged to turn back. By the time they had stumbled back to the outskirts of civilisation, Felipe was quite himself again, and had found the energy to whistle—a thing he did only when he was happy.

Disappointed, but with no feelings of rancour, Fawcett returned to Cuyaba, and Felipe went back to Rio de Janeiro. In February of the following year Fawcett intended to set off again, taking a route by water, thereby dispensing with animals. He hoped to find another companion, besides Felipe—though it is strange and perhaps indicative of the desperate shortage of assistants that he should not have dispensed with Felipe, along with the horses and mules.

Felipe, however, arrived in April with supplies—totally inadequate supplies—for a second expedition. He told

Fawcett he had promised his mother to be back by Christmas. He sounded then like a very small boy going to a party, and indeed Felipe remains something of an enigma. Colonel Fawcett, tough, determined, experienced, trailed by the young man who had brought all the wrong supplies, who was terrified of wasps and got depressed in the Brazilian wilderness; who studied birds (when he was not depressed) and whistled—and had to be home by Christmas—together they were curiously incongruous. Yet the Colonel's forbearance is rather touching. Let down through Felipe's lack of stamina, perplexed by his moods, and often irritated by his incompetence, he, nevertheless, showed concern for the young man's welfare, and never failed to take him home, as it were, at the first signs of sickness.

With Felipe as his sole companion, Fawcett planned no more than an extensive reconnoitre, probing routes into the unknown territory where ultimately he hoped to find his lost city, but this time from the east, from Bahia towards Goyaz.

The country round Bahia and Ilheus on the Atlantic and Conquista and Jequiré inland and through which flow the rivers Pardo and Contas is rich in tobacco, coffee and cacao, while Bahia itself used to be the centre of the African slave-traffic. The forests that extend westwards became valuable timber sites and the Indians that lived in them were being gradually forced further into the interior towards the dry uplands where white men had hardly penetrated. It was somewhere in this region that an old man, having lost his way, stumbled on an ancient city where he saw a huge statue of a man rising militantly from the ruined square.

This story particularly intrigued Fawcett for the description of the old city closely resembled that described in the famous document on which so much of his convictions were based. The only major discrepancy lay in the

distance from Bahia. For the Portuguese expedition of 1743 there had been a long and arduous trek back to the coast. For the old man, it had been a matter of a few days.

Three days' travelling brought Fawcett to the little village of Boa Nova, and from here he tried to penetrate the Gongugy forests. Although he did not expect to find his lost city here, but several hundred miles on in a west-north-west direction, the forests were so steeped in legend that he was prepared for any eventuality. Somewhere within it lay a deserted gold mine; from time to time enormous gems had been brought out, and stone-slabs had been discovered, curiously inscribed.

Finding that the trails into the forest quickly petered out, Fawcett moved southwards. At an estancia (i.e. a ranch) near the confluence of the Ganguay and Rio de Ouro, an Indian attack had resulted in the death of a child, and the ranchers had set off into the forest and massacred all the inhabitants of a small Indian settlement. Fawcett was strongly advised to go no farther, but, intrepid as ever and followed by an anxious Felipe, he sent the animals back to Boa Nova, and continued on foot, finally cutting into the forest at its southern extremity, and heading north. Here the Indians held undisputed sway. The forest trails were spiked—to discourage intruders—and would end abruptly: for the explorers there was no way of knowing where they began again. To add to their difficulties it rained for days on end. Felipe, inevitably, began to sicken, and even Fawcett's enthusiasm wavered. Damp and dispirited they trudged north, sometimes coming upon a deserted Indian camp where they were able to find a night's shelter in the huts. The camps were always empty, but they were always littered with the same empty nut shells and snail shells, though where the snails were found Fawcett could never discover.

In these gruesome, twilit forests, silent but for the

dripping rain, they subsisted mainly on partridges and monkeys and on occasional snakes, till at last, where the forests rose to steep hills, they came to isolated estancias and sat down to more conventional meals.

Felipe, by now, had had enough. Complaining bitterly of pains, he persuaded the reluctant colonel to head back for civilisation. A kindly rancher lent them mules for the journey along the banks of the river Pardo, and Felipe, no longer slogging it on foot and with the prospect of Christmas at home, once more could be heard whistling. They reached Bahia by boat. Fawcett and Felipe said goodbye to one another, and as abruptly as they had come together they parted.

Not long afterwards Fawcett set off again for the interior, this time quite alone. He was away for three months.

This lonely expedition was the last of his 'trial runs'. 'I have probed,' he wrote, 'from three sides for the surest way in: I have seen enough to make any risk worth while in order to see more, and our story when we return from the next expedition may thrill the world.'

The next expedition did not in fact 'thrill the world', but it did create a mystery that the world has never forgotten.

In 1923, Fawcett was planning his 'do or die' expedition. Of his two companions, one at least he was sure of — his eldest son, Jack, a big, powerful young man, who neither smoked nor drank. Jack's school friend, Raleigh Rimell, was to complete the party.

Fawcett wrote about this time: 'I now have what I believe to be the correct bearings, and given normal luck we'll reach it. It will be no pampered exploration party, with an army of bearers, guides and cargo animals. Such top-heavy expeditions get nowhere . . .'

Fawcett was quietly confident. Satisfied that neither

Jack nor Raleigh would let him down, he was further pleased to hear that he was to be special correspondent of the North America Newspaper Alliance, which together with 'various scientific societies' would ease him of the financial onus that till now had put such an effective damper on his expeditions. Reticence over the details of the journey underlines Fawcett's confidence. With his objective—the mysterious 'Z'—so clearly within his grasp, he had no intention of giving others the opportunity to beat him to it. Its whereabouts, according to Fawcett, were known only by two men, besides himself. One was an Englishman, 'who before he left the country was suffering from an advanced stage of cancer'; the other was a Frenchman, who claimed to have covered the whole area in which Fawcett expected to find the lost mines of Muribeca, and emphatically denied their existence. However the Frenchman, Fawcett wrote, 'had an alcoholic breath, and I cannot consider drinkers fully reliable'.

The route the expedition was to take led north from Cuyaba to Dead Horse Camp, a point Fawcett reached with Felipe back in 1920. Heading north-east they would cross the Xingu, and then strike off into the forests somewhere midway between the Xingu and the Araguaya, about latitude 10° South. Here, among 'the Snoring Mountains'—these have since proved to have been imaginary—Fawcett hoped to reach his goal. And then by devious trails leading east, he expected to link up with civilisation and reach the coast at Bahia.

About that fateful journey, as recorded in the letters of Fawcett's two enthusiastic young companions, there is a poignancy that is most memorable. For to their eyes everything was new and exciting. Yet their writings take on a nightmare quality. One becomes aware that all



PERCY HARRISON FAWCETT
Pelechuco 1911



SVEN HEDIN

they were seeing, all they felt or laughed at was for the last time. For Fawcett himself, the expedition was the culmination of years of exploration and planning and sacrifice. To die in pursuit of a life's dream is no tragic way to die. But Jack and Raleigh Rimel were no further than on the brink of manhood. Their youthfulness, their freshness was painfully portrayed in all that they experienced.

For Raleigh there was a love affair on board ship: and a growing impatience to get into the forests. For Jack there were those fleeting, but often unforgettable, glimpses from a railway carriage: of parrots, rheas; a spider's web in a tree, 'with a spider about the size of a sparrow sitting in the middle'. For both of them there were the newspaper accounts of the expedition; there was the snake farm at Butantan; alligators to shoot in the Paraguay, and their first sight of a jaguar.

From Rio de Janeiro they travelled by train to Porto Esperança, and by boat to Cuyaba. They would continue by mule and finally foot it. February, March, April: month by month they moved slowly towards the frontiers of unknown territory, getting acclimatised to the suffocating heat and hardened to the clouds of black mosquitoes and the ants and the stings of horse-flies.

Now in Cuyaba, the two young men are experimenting with their guns, and Jack is rather enjoying a fortnight's growth of beard. By May 16th, they have arrived at Bacairy Post, Matto Grosso, still cheerful, confident and eager to press on. They catch their first glimpse of wild Indians, all stark naked. Raleigh's foot seems at this point to have gone septic from bites. On May 29th, Fawcett himself writes: Raleigh's foot is now 'ulcerous and swollen'.

On the 29th Fawcett wrote again—a letter to his wife sent back with the peons, who, for fear of Indians, would go no further: 'Here we are at Dead Horse Camp,

Lat. $11^{\circ} 43' \text{ S.}$ and $54^{\circ} 35' \text{ W.}$, the spot where my horse died in 1920. Only his white bones remain. We can bathe ourselves here, but the insects make it a matter of great haste. Nevertheless, the season is good. It is very cold at night and fresh in the morning; but insects and heat come by midday, and from then till six o'clock in the evening it is sheer misery in the camp. You need have no fear of failure. . . .'

These were the last words he wrote. This was the finish.

. . .

Or was it? Colonel Fawcett had said that he would probably be out of touch with civilisation for some two years. Now, in 1927, those two years were up, and official enquiries were made to the Brazilian Government, who began investigations. No light was thrown on the whereabouts of the lost expedition. The Brazilian Government feared that the expedition had perished. But there was no proof. Suddenly Colonel Fawcett had become an object of world-wide speculation.

A mystery keeps its popular appeal and will not die until someone solves it. Numerous travellers, some in good faith, others excited by the prospect of a brief headline—for the press never underestimated Fawcett's news-value—claimed to have met him at some point on their various journeys through Brazil. The first, and therefore the best known, of these was a French engineer named Courteville, who—apparently not having heard of Fawcett—met an old man in the Minas Geveas region, sitting by the roadside, looking frail and sick and being bitten by mosquitos. He said that his name was Fawcett. Although the story was widely publicised, the details were vague and inconsequential, and the Newspaper Syndicate that had financed Fawcett's final expedition were not prepared at the moment to act on such unconvincing evidence.

However, in 1928, the Syndicate changed its mind. A large relief expedition led by Commander Dyott set off northwards from Cuyaba and eventually succeeded in reaching and crossing the Kulisen river and coming to a village of the Nafagua Indians, that lay beyond Dead Horse Camp—the last point mentioned by Fawcett before he disappeared. Commander Dyott was taken to the chief of the tribe, Aloique, whose son, Dyott noticed, was wearing round his neck a small brass plate with the maker's name on it—Silver and Co., London. There was also a kind of trunk there that Aloique explained in sign-language had been given him by a white man with two companions, both of whom were lame. It appears that Aloique had guided the three men across the Kuluene river whence they came to a Kalapalo Indian village. From this point they had gone on alone and their fires had been seen by the Indians for the next five days. On the sixth day, no smoke had risen from the dry grass. Aloique then, by eloquent gestures, described to Dyott what he considered must have been their fate.

Dyott had come very close to the area in which Fawcett had disappeared. Five, perhaps six, days across country and he would have come, according to Aloique, to the bones. This seemingly so short a journey, unfortunately was not made and was to confound others after him. Dyott returned to the main body of the expedition to muster more companions for the hazardous dash away from the river across the campo. At the confluence of the Kulisen and Kuluene rivers he found the camp overrun with Indians, whose demands for gifts had grown far from friendly. Surrounded by hostile natives and faced with a food crisis, Dyott, rather than try to solve a mystery, was only too anxious not to create another, and escaped by night in canoes down the Xingu.

So Dyott returned to civilisation. He was convinced

that Fawcett had been massacred, but he could show, after all his exertions, singularly little to prove it: the mystery remained, more tantalising than ever. And then in 1930 a journalist, Albert De Winton, set off for the interior. He too, in his search for Fawcett, came upon the Kalapalos Indians, but he never returned; the mystery took on a further sinister twist.

For a year or two the Fawcett mystery was forgotten. But early in 1932 interest flared up again. A Swiss traveller, Stephan Rattin, arrived at the British Consulate at Sao Paulo straight from Matto Grosso. He had found a white man prisoner of an Indian tribe, and had managed to exchange a few words with him. Rattin's claim might have been dismissed as moonshine, but in his statement to the Consul there were facts that could not lightly be denied. Rattin and his companions had been washing some clothes in a stream—a tributary of the Sao Manrel River—when they found themselves surrounded by Indians. Rattin returned with them to their camp. 'After sunset there suddenly appeared an old man clad in skins, with a long yellowish-white beard and long hair. I saw immediately that he was a white man. The chief gave him a severe look and said something to the others. He looked very sad and could not take his eyes off me.' According to Rattin, there followed a drinking party that lasted till dawn, and while the Indian chief lay in drunken slumber, Rattin was able to exchange a few words with the white man, who said that he was an English colonel, and implored Rattin to get in touch with the English Consulate, who in turn must contact Major Paget. The 'English Colonel' had badly scratched hands, and Rattin gave him iodine. Round his neck was a locket with a photograph 'of a lady wearing a large hat, and two small children'. He was also wearing a signet ring with a lion engraved on it. On being asked whether he was alone, the 'English

Colonel' mentioned his 'sleeping son', whereupon he began to weep.

The following morning Rattin and his companions were allowed to leave, though they were escorted by some fifty Indians until noon. When Rattin tried to cross-examine them about the white man, they merely repeated 'Poschu demas'—which apparently meant 'bad man'.

The story is maddeningly inconclusive: there is so much that seems authentic; so much inconsistent and illogical. First one must consider Rattin's motives—if the story is to be considered fictitious. If he was to be hailed as the discoverer of the missing explorer he would presumably wish to make capital of his unique find. This Rattin never attempted to do. He merely expressed a desire to lead an expedition into the interior and rescue the prisoner. Why, too, if his story was mere fabrication, did he not make it more convincing? Why risk the inclusion of facts that could at once have discredited it? For the description of the ring had tallied, according to Mrs. Fawcett, with one he always wore. He did, furthermore, have two sons; there was a 'Major Paget' as well as Sir Ralph Paget, both of whom were well known to Fawcett. If Rattin was diabolical enough to glean these facts before his exploration into Matto Grosso, surely he would afterwards have sought some reward.

And yet, one feels, how easily, if Rattin had really met Fawcett, could he have proved it. Some written message; the ring with the lion engraving, sent as a token; or the gold locket with the picture of his wife and two boys. If Rattin himself had not had the presence of mind to ask for such proof, surely Fawcett after years of captivity would not have let the chance slip to tell the world that he was still among the living?

Expeditions to find Fawcett, whether small and compact or large and cumbersome, all broke down at a similar point on their respective journeys: the point

where a party was compelled to leave the streams and go on foot across the sparse, waterless jungle-land, among Indians who were not half-tame like their river brethren through contact with missionaries and naturalists and explorers, but were savage and dangerous to men inevitably in a state of exhaustion

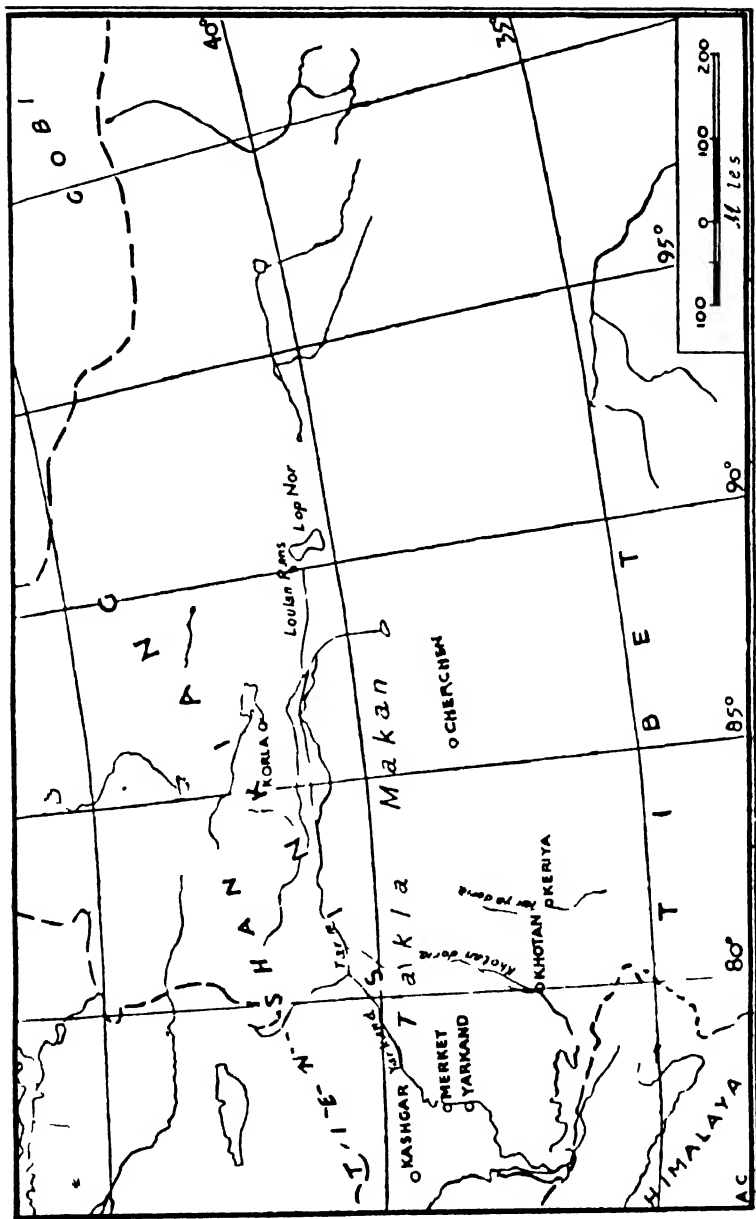
The mystery remained, but isolated clues and reports still came in as if to keep the light of hope burning. In June 1933, a theodolite compass was found by Colonel Botelho near the camp of the Bacairi Indians, and later that year came an account of an expedition to the Kuluene river. In this there was a story by an Indian woman, who, it would seem, came forward voluntarily with information about some missing men. It is difficult to see what possible good it could have done her to make it all up. Mostly through sign-language she explained that there had been three white men, one of whom was an old man with rings on his right hand. Up to a year ago she had seen them on several occasions, for they were prisoners of the Aruvudu Tribe, a savage tribe, but one friendly to her own. She was asked by the expedition why the three men did not try to escape. In answer, she suggested that they possessed no firearms and were surrounded by such tribes as the Suyas and Cayapos who would certainly have killed them had the Aruvudus let them go. More convincing than the fact that the old man had the status of chief and that one of the young men had married another chief's daughter and that there was a male child with blue eyes and light hair more convincing was her description of how two of the men drew pictures in the sand to amuse the children. According to Mr. Brian Fawcett, the Colonel's surviving son, both his father and his brother, Jack, were artists, and Jack in particular, was quite unable 'to pass over a clean stretch of sand without finding a twig or a splinter and scribbling on it'.

To add substance to this story, as late as 1935, Mr. Patrick Ulyatt, returning from Matto Grosso wrote to Mrs. Fawcett: 'While I have yet no proof and do not desire that you should feel I have, I still maintain that one of your husband's party is alive. . . .' Mr. Ulyatt not only felt a burning desire to return, he actually did, and then, hot on the scent, he and his brother found themselves surrounded by Indians who would not allow them to pass through them.

Ten years after their disappearance then, rumour had it that they were alive, ringed by hostile Indians in a country that no expedition could penetrate with a force large enough and sufficiently well-equipped to be able to ignore the menace of its various inhabitants.

From time to time bones and skulls were brought out and expertly examined; photographs of white children appeared. As late as 1951, a Brazilian, Senhor Vilas Boas, claimed to have wrung out of a Kalapalos chief, named Izarori, a confession that he had murdered the three white men, whom the Nafaqua chief, Aloique, had brought to him in 1925. What could have induced him to admit to a crime he did not commit is difficult to fathom, for Fawcett's 'grave' was disclosed, the bones dug up, and on being examined at the Royal Anthropological Institute in London, were found not to be those of Colonel Fawcett at all.

So the fate of that small and gallant expedition, like the fate of the crew of the *Marie Celeste*, will forever remain a mystery. Whether the party died of starvation or exhaustion or were taken captive or were massacred, it is clear, we shall never really know. The great Brazilian forests and the intractable Indians that inhabit them have known well how to keep a secret.



VI

SVEN HEDIN

(1865-1952)

ON April 24th, 1880, the great Swedish explorer, Nordenskiöld, sailed in on the *Vega* to the harbour of Stockholm. After a prolonged and perilous voyage he had forced the north-east passage. For ten months the *Vega* had been ice-bound off the extreme eastern shores of Siberia in the Arctic. Relief expeditions had failed to reach her. In the end she had fought her way free and, steaming dangerously between gigantic ice-floes, had passed through the Bering Straits and reached the Pacific Ocean. She then girdled the entire continent of Asia before sailing in to Stockholm.

That night the whole city was illuminated with lamps and torches. A million reflections dazzled the harbour waters and, dominating all the lights a mighty star, *Vega*, shone out in brilliant gas-flames from the Royal Palace.

Among the thousands who cheered Nordenskiöld's triumphant return was the Swedish boy, Sven Hedin. 'All my life,' he wrote, 'I shall remember that day.' Nordenskiöld became his hero.

One sparkling winter's morning with the snow lying thick on the streets, the boy saw the great man walking towards him. Then he noticed, as he passed, the explorer's footmarks clearly and deeply imprinted in the snow. Carefully fitting his own steps into those of his hero the excited youth proceeded with giant strides to follow him up the street.

Sven Hedin had walked in the footsteps of a famous explorer. He continued to walk in those footsteps all his life.

'I longed,' he wrote, 'for the open air and for great adventures on lonely roads.' These longings were soon to be realised. The best years of his life were spent in the heart of Asia. In the same way that he had walked quite literally in Nordenskiöld's footsteps, so he was to put the details of vast areas of Central Asia quite literally 'on the map'. These 'lonely roads' that he longed for and which he so obstinately and bravely pursued were unnamed tracks across the Himalayas and Northern Tibet, across the Lop-nor and Gobi deserts and all the desolate wastes of Sinkiang or Eastern Turkestan. He was the first to unearth the ruins of the ancient city of Lou-lan, that had lain a thousand years beneath the sands even when Marco Polo passed it unawares; he was the first to discover the source of the Indus and of the Brahmaputra, the Holy River. To these and other achievements must be added his conquest of the tremendous mountain range, hitherto unexplored, that borders the south side of the lofty Tibetan plateau, a range that he called Transhimalaya but which is still known as the Hedin Mountains; and lastly his discovery of the 'Wandering Lake', the Lop-nor lake. By careful levellings and from the mapping of ancient river-beds, Hedin discovered that the lake through the centuries had moved from its original position and was in the process of returning to it. Before he died he had the immeasurable satisfaction of hearing that this indeed had happened.

Along these 'lonely roads', Hedin had his 'great adventures'. Supreme among them was the frightful crossing of the Takla-makan desert, a disastrous and nightmare journey, that, against all reason, he at least managed to survive.

At fifteen he was already preparing himself for a life in

'the open air'. He took a strenuous course of physical training; he rolled about in the snow and on bitter cold nights slept by open windows. He drew maps of all the expeditions that had been made to the polar regions, for not unnaturally he wanted to go north as Nordonskiöld had done. He drew in fact six volumes of maps while he was still at school, and countless sketches. These sketches were quite brilliant and lend wonderful colour and zest to his travel books.

But he was not destined to seek out the North Pole.

A Swedish engineer living in Baku on the Caspian Sea wanted a private tutor for his son. Hedin's headmaster recommended him for the post, and in the summer of 1885, at the age of twenty, he set off on the first of his journeys to the East.

It was an exciting journey because he was young and adventurous, and everything he saw and did was new.

On the Moscow skyline he saw for the first time the green onion-shaped cupolas of the churches, topped with gleaming crosses and, as the train sped south among vast stretches of ripening corn he saw the peasants in their red blouses working in the fields, and along the unkept roads the troikas (three horses) gaily pulling tarantasses (carts) to the merry jingling of bells. At the country stations he had his first glimpse of saks, from the Caucasian mountains, sturdy men in fur caps, and belts with pistols and daggers.

At Vladikavkaz the train journey ended. A carriage drawn by seven horses led him up the precipitous, zig-zagging road through the Caucasus, where the snow-covered peak of Kazbek towered 16,500 feet above the plains. The spinning wheels hugged the rim of the twisting road and he could look down, breathlessly, into the green valleys and churning streams far below.

The road was built in the reign of Nicholas I. It cost so much that when the Tsar came to see it he exclaimed in

dismay, 'I had expected to see a road of gold, but I find it all of grey stones.'

At last he reached Baku. He stayed there seven months, among the oil-wells and the giant derricks that bestrode them. He saw great jets of crude-oil spouting up into the sky, and on one occasion with his young pupil he saw a whole lake of oil catch fire. The flames in their height and density brought back the daylight to winter darkness as the entire town worked frantically with earth and axe to stop them spreading.

Early the following year his tutoring ended. He had already learnt the Persian and Tartar languages, and decided with the money he had earned to travel on horse-back into Persia. In all his travels, Hedin never chose Europeans as his companions. In this sense he always travelled alone, mixing with those he met on the road and taking his guides or bearers from among the native people whom he happened to be with. Some became lasting friends and faithfully joined him whenever he passed their way.

Now in a blinding snow-storm he crossed the Elburz mountains into Persia and arrived safely at Kazvin. Along the 90-mile stretch of road between Kazvin and Teheran, he travelled by tarantass. At one point another tarantass overtook him to the contemptuous jeers of its passengers. Hedin bribed his driver to catch them up. A tremendous race ensued as the six horses tore along the highway amid clouds of yellow dust and to the sound of screeching wheels.

From Teheran he rode south alone. At every stage of his journey the strange, exotic East unfolded its wonders. He passed Koom and saw the tomb of the holy fatimī: a splendid golden cupola between two delicate minarets; he stayed in that most wonderful of Persian towns, Isphahan with its Royal Mosque, and its 'Palace of Forty Pillars'; the gardens were sweet with roses and on the

sunlit walls grew peaches and apricots that scented the warm night winds. He visited the ruins of Persepolis and saw part of the walls of the palace of Darius I, and broken columns that more than 2,000 years ago had supported the palace of Xerxes, the floors of which had been of marble, and the beds of gold, until in 331 B.C., Alexander of Macedon had burnt it to the ground. Between these oases of mosques and green scented gardens, Hedin crossed wide wastes of semi-desert where lizards and red spiders crawled and tinkling caravans passed.

He reached the Persian Gulf at Bushir and in a temperature of 110° F. sailed to Basra and then by paddle-steamer up the Tigris to Baghdad. Between those two historic rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates, the city of Babylon once stood and the ruins of Nineveh, and now between the palm trees along the shores and the mellow crumbling walls were black Arab tents and buffalo herds and on the water the tiny fishing boats with white fluttering sails.

In Baghdad he hired a horse and joined a caravan going north to Kermanshah. Days in the desert were stifflingly hot and the nights uncomfortably cold. There were queer sights to be seen: corpses wrapped in blankets and smelling strongly in the heat, being borne on the backs of mules to a village burial place; hyenas and jackals feasting off a dead camel; a sky blackened by locusts.

In Kermanshah, with only a few silver coins left he called on Aga Mohammed Hassan, a rich merchant and an 'agent of the British Empire' who lent him money and lavished hospitality on him, so that he was soon able to re-cross the Elburz mountains and return to Baku. He crossed the Black Sea to Constantinople. On his way to Sofia he was arrested on account of the sketches in his sketch-book, and in Sofia itself was shot at by a suspicious palace guard. Soon, however, he was

back with his family in his native city of Stockholm.

This first journey was of enormous importance. He had seen enough of the East to wish to see more. On the shores of the Caspian he had sensed the vast, unconquered lands beyond, in the heart of Asia. He knew he must return, not as a mere traveller, but as a scientific explorer. He therefore began an intensive study of geography and geology, first at Upsala University, and later in Berlin where he came under the inspiring influence of Baron von Richthofen, then the greatest living authority on the geography of Asia.

He published an account of his travels, and despite his University work was soon longing once again for the open air. An excuse to interrupt his studies suddenly and dramatically came when he was asked by the Prime Minister to act as interpreter to a delegation, that King Oscar of Sweden was sending to Nasr-el-Din, the Shah of Persia.

The delegation set off in April 1890. During the official visit to Teheran, Hedin became closely acquainted with the Shah. Like other Eastern potentates before and after him, the Shah was destined to die at the hands of an assassin.

Hedin joined the royal party to the Shah's summer residence in the hills. Camped at the foot of Mt. Demavand, Hedin could not resist attempting to reach its 18,000 feet summit, that for many miles dominates with its lone conical bulk and pointed snowcap the dusty road to Meshed. In the rarified air about the mountains' higher regions, Hedin had to be dragged up by a rope attached to two guides. Gasping he reached the top where he was rewarded with a superb view across the desert wastes, and then with an exhilarating descent during which he was able to slide down like a skier, 7,000 feet until the snow gave way to rocks.

One day, while he was in Teheran, he remembered a

promise he had made to a professor of anthropology in Stockholm to try to take back the skull of a Parsee.

Zoroastrianism, or fire worship, one of the world's oldest religions, is still practised in Persia, though its participants, the Parsees, are much hated by the worshippers of Islam. Not far from the capital was a burial-ground, the Tower of Silence. In company with Dr. Hybennet, a Swedish physician, and the Shah's dentist, Sven Hedin set off, choosing the heat of the afternoon, when few ventured beyond the shade of their houses, for his *cerie* mission.

It was a profane and therefore dangerous undertaking. To allay the suspicions of the carriage-driver (they had borrowed a ladder from a peasant) the two men pretended they were going to picnic on one of the cemetery walls. In a soft bag, the ingenious Hedin even carried some water-melons, each the size of a man's head, which he hoped to exchange for human skulls.

Having climbed on to the wall, Dr. Hybennet stayed on guard while Hedin descended the steps to the circular bowl of the burial-place. The smell of bodies hung sickeningly on the air, and the corpses in various stages of decomposition lay in their silent, shallow graves. Some were merely skeletons, eaten by the vultures and the ravens and bleached white in the fierce sun; others were still hideously recognisable.

Hedin collected three heads, washed them as best he could and substituted them for the melons in his bag. Later the skulls were buried for a month and then boiled in milk. They can still be seen in the Craniological Museum in Stockholm.

While the Swedish delegation was preparing to return home, Hedin telegraphed the King, asking for permission to extend his travels into Central Asia. Not only was permission granted, funds were also made available for whatever journey he chose to undertake.

Once more the young man was off along those 'lonely roads' that so haunted his imagination. He travelled towards Meshed, across a land of mirages and empty wastes where the jackals lived and crept up at night on the sleeping traveller to forage for food. Outside Nishapur not far from where the great Omar Khayyám is buried, he rested in one of the numerous underground caves that were used as opium-dens. Through the haze of bitter-sweet opium smoke he saw the smokers lying against the dark walls, drugged into oblivion. He stayed long enough to take a few puffs himself and then hastened on to the pilgrim city. He then crossed the border into Russian Turkestan, reached the ancient town of Merv, and was soon among the glories of Bokhara and Samarkand.

In Samarkand, 'the pearl among the cities of Central Asia', Hedin visited the tomb of Tamerlane, that great conqueror of the fourteenth century. The gorgeous buildings fashioned by his orders that gave Samarkand its unrivalled beauty still stand as testimony of his greatness.

Hedin lingered there among the mosques and the minarets, the alleyways and the bazaars, among the music and the dancers and the jasmin, as long as he dared. But autumn was approaching and he wanted to penetrate deeper into the heart of Asia. He wanted to reach Kashgar in Sinkiang, the most westerly of Chinese cities, and unique in being farther from the ocean than any city in the world.

At the little town of Osh Hedin for the first time had come into the shadow of the mightiest mountain formation on earth. To reach Kashgar it was necessary to cross the Terek-davan, a pass 13,000 feet up, that linked the Tian-shan and Pamir mountains, the north-western extension of the Himalayas. It was December, the last caravan had already left and it was snowing. He was

advised to wait until the spring. However, with a small party of servants and helped by the friendly Kirghiz, whose tents afforded warmth at night on the freezing slopes, Hedin reached the top of the pass where amid the snow and ice lay the unburied remains of men and animals that were the yearly victims of storm and blizzard.

But with the sour milk and fatty mutton offered by the kindly Kirghiz, the party was sustained where otherwise it might have perished. A fortnight later they reached the walls of Kashgar, a town which became his base on subsequent expeditions.

Now he returned across the frozen steppes and the frozen rivers to Bokhara. One night his carriage wheels slipped on the ice-bank of the Sisak river. Carriage, horses and driver, and all Hedin's belongings plunged into the dark river among great chunks of drifting ice.

In Bokhara he was lavishly entertained by the Emir, Saïd Abdul Ahad. Previous Emirs had not been so friendly towards strangers. One cannot but recall the fate of Colonel Stoddart and Captain Connolly. For years they were incarcerated in a local prison by Nasrullah. They were subjected to the ordeal of the vermin-pit, and cruelly allowed to believe in their ultimate release, that gave them strength to endure their suffering. But their release was only from the Emir's tortures. In 1842 he beheaded them.

Hedin returned to Stockholm and to his adoring family in the spring of 1891, and plunged again into the geographical study of Asia, under the guidance of Baron von Richthofen.

It was not until 1893 that his studies were complete and he was ready once more to take 'the road of wild adventure'. Although photographs generally depict him in his middle years, when he was broad and wore a thick short moustache and pince-nez, at the age of twenty-

eight he was lean and clean-shaven. About him there was a sense of physical economy that suggested enormous reserves of energy and supreme fitness. In his eyes, that should by tradition have been blue but were in fact as brown as a Mongol's, there was a burning intensity, so that his lean, tanned face glowed with a kind of hungry determination to succeed. At the same time he was immensely affable. Brought up in the security of a happy home, he clearly sought to extend this aura of contentment to the world at large. His charm and good humour seemed sometimes therefore insincere; his self-confidence more like conceit.

However this may be, as a leader he was determined, considerate and full of a courage that was truly inspiring. Men trusted him, knowing him to be generous, knowing he would not make demands upon them that he would not make upon himself. On the eve of departure he was thus physically in his prime, and, since all his life he remained at heart an adventurous boy, he was mentally as mature as he ever would be.

So in the autumn, he set out a third time, now to write his name indelibly across the unknown wastes of Asia.

Again King Oscar generously helped to finance him in his project, which was 'to dispel the haze that still enshrouded large parts of the central deserts, northern and central Tibet and the Lop Nor district'.

Hedin decided to reach Kashgar by way of Pamir, the region known as 'the Roof of the World'.

At Tashkent he bought his tents, blankets, fur coats and boots, saddles, ammunition, along with a host of presents from cloth to magnifying-glasses, and with three servants, chief of whom was Islam Baï, and with a number of pack-horses he set off with his caravan in February 1894 towards the icy mountain slopes. It was a bad time of year; the season of avalanches and

blizzards. The slippery path wound round the brinks of ravines. As they climbed, the path disappeared in deep snow drifts hardened with the cold, and had to be dug out with picks and axes. Every day became an anxious struggle to reach a Kirghiz camp by nightfall. At one point they climbed over 90 feet of snow that the previous day had crashed down from the ridges above them. Whole caravans perished in this way. At nights even the mercury froze; there were times when they were helplessly walled in by snow; and times when they had to lay and re-lay, yard by yard, bits of cloth for the horses to step on lest they should slip over the edge and be lost. One horse nevertheless did lose its footing and fell thousands of feet, to be killed at the bottom of the valley.

Whether they camped among the Kirghiz or in the huts built for the post-couriers, they were never far from wolves. Too many flocks of sheep had been slaughtered, too many shepherds torn to pieces, for the Kirghiz to feel anything but dread for their fanatical boldness. So great was their fear and hatred of wolves that when they caught one alive, they would fix a pole to its neck and a block of wood in its mouth and tie its body up with rope and whip it and blind it with burning coal. The first time Hedin witnessed such a scene he shot the wolf to put it out of its misery.

For the next few months he lived among the Kirghiz, and made a perilous journey around Mustagh-ata, the 'Father of the Ice-mountains'. It was perilous for the great walls of hard snow that broke off from the mountain top and hurtled down, and it was perilous for the hidden crevasses that led to certain death, or almost certain death. One of the yaks Hedin was using in place of horses broke open with its immense weight such a rift and disappeared. When Hedin reached the spot he saw below the wall of snow the yak hanging between the sides of the crevasse, suspended by its horns and the bundles

of fuel fastened to its back. A rope was slung round its body, and other yaks dragged it to safety.

At an altitude of 20,000 feet they were halted by a blizzard that reduced visibility to zero. By this time, too, every member of the little expedition was suffering from mountain-sickness, headaches and deafness. Hour after hour the wind screamed round the hastily devised camp. To attain the summit was now out of the question. Nevertheless it was a moment to test the courage and the loyalty of the Kirghiz. With the storm still raging, Hedin ordered them to load the yaks and to continue the climb, though they could see nothing, and were still feeling too ill to eat. Not a man disobeyed his orders, though each knew his orders were sheer madness.

He returned to Kashgar for Christmas, having built and sailed a boat—the first the Kirghiz had ever seen—on the Kara-Kul, in order to explore it comprehensively.

North, beyond Tibet and the Himalayas, lies the province of Sinkiang. Its high, dead plateau of sand is known as the Takla-makan desert, that stretching eastwards, merges into the deserts of Lop and Gobi. Two rivers, the Yarkand-daria and the Khotan-daria, flow north across the Takla-makan desert and ultimately join the Tarim.

Hedin's ambition was to cross the desert between these two almost parallel rivers. There are weird legends about the deserts of Takla-makan and Lop. As Hedin approached, village by village, the desert fringes, he listened to stories of spirits that call the traveller by name and lead him round in fatal circles, stories of vast sand-waves, hundreds of feet high, of queer sounds that are heard at night, the sounds of musical instruments and drums. 650 years before, Marco Polo had listened to the same stories.

On April 10th, the caravan left the village of Merket on the banks of the Yarkand-daria. The whole popula-

tion watched them go, certain they would never return. The caravan consisted of Hedin, his faithful servant, Islam Baï, Kassim and Mohammed Shah, the camel-drivers and Yolchi, the guide. There were eight camels, heavily laden with provisions and there were two dogs and a sheep. They had water calculated to last them ten days. Since, according to the guide, it was only some four days journeying between the last lake and the Khotan-daria, there seemed little cause for anxiety.

The caravan plodded steadily north-east, camping on the shores of lakes or wherever water could be found after digging. On April 22nd they spent the day resting at the last known lake and the next day they swung south-east across 'the sterile yellow sand-dunes'. The last tamarisks faded behind them, the dunes towered sometimes 90 feet before them; when that night, hoping to preserve their water supplies, they dug deep into the sands, there was none.

On the night of the 24th, the temperature of the water they drank was 86°. The aspect was desolate. 'Not a trace of vegetable or animal life was to be seen, not a wind-driven leaf, not a moth.'

On the 25th, Hedin was shocked to find they had water only for two days. Yolchi, the guide, who was in charge of the water supply, assured Hedin this was sufficient. Hedin hesitated. If they were to turn back this was the moment to do so. Ever trustful by nature, Hedin bowed to his guide's superior knowledge. They continued. The following day they staggered over sand ridges 150 feet high. A raven appeared and circled above them before flying off into the shimmering heat haze. The party was exhausted and there was no water left for the weary camels, two of which had already died from exhaustion. That night they dug for water. They dug frantically; the sand began to moisten. In expectation of water they drank from their own dwindling supply. And then

at ten feet the sand crumbled again. There was no water there.

Occasionally clouds gathered. Tents were spread to catch the water, but the clouds thinned out and dissolved. On the night of the 27th, a sand-storm raged. In the morning the four men dug their belongings out with their hands. The wind continued to blow at hurricane force. One of the camels lay down and refused to move. The caravan eventually halted but when the men went back to fetch the beast, their tracks had been obliterated by the wind and the camel was lost.

By April 30th there were two small jugs of water left. During the day one of these disappeared. Later Yolchi was found drinking from it.

On May 1st Hedin wrote what he believed were his last words. 'Halted on a high dune, where the camels dropped. We examined the east through field-glasses: mountains of sand in all directions, not a straw, no life. All, men as well as camels, are extremely weak. God help us!' That day cameras, medicine-chest, saddles, almost all their belongings were abandoned. Hedin tried drinking the spirit for the primus stove. Afterwards he lay too ill to move. The caravan continued on. He lay listening to the camel-bells becoming fainter and fainter. The wind rose again, and in panic he got up, for the wind would erase the tracks and he would be lost. As the sun went down the four men collapsed. Later Islam and Yolchi caught some camel's water, and mixing it with sugar and vinegar, tried to drink it. Also they killed the sheep, but in the heat the blood quickly congealed and stuck in their throats.

Mohammed Shah was now delirious and Yolchi too weak to move. The rest dared not sleep; encouraging Yolchi to follow, Hedin, with Kassim and Islam pushed on through the night. From a ridge Hedin looked back in the twilight at the forlorn tent and the two men on

the sand. And suddenly he was determined not to die. Leaving a lantern burning he struggled on till morning. Now everything was abandoned. It was each man for himself. Islam lay in the sand too exhausted to go on; and the dog, Yoldosh, remained with him. The will to live had left both man and beast. At the same time the last four camels stretched out their necks in preparation for death. May 3rd, and Hedin and Kassim were crawling yard by yard over the dunes. In the morning they sighted a tamarisk, and chewed its leaves. They hung their clothes on it and lay all day in a coma beneath its meagre shade. In the evening they struggled forward, spurred on now by the sight of three poplars. They tried to dig towards their roots for water but the spade they had dragged with them slipped from their hands. They went on and soon a dark wall of trees appeared along the horizon.

The effort to reach the trees drained the last drops of Kassim's strength. In the moonlight, Hedin went on through the forest alone, staggering, crawling on all-fours. Then suddenly the thick growth, that had torn his clothes and gashed his hands, petered out. He looked down from a terraced bank on to the river-bed of the Khotan-daria. It was as dry as the desert. In the cool of the evening he groped southwards along the river-bed. He had gone a mile when he heard the sound of wings rising from water. The next moment he was standing on the edge of a pool 70 feet long.

The water brought him strength almost at once. He took off his boots, and, filling them with water, retraced his steps. But in the forest he got lost. He set fire to some bushes and called to Kassim, but there was no answer. In the morning he picked up the trail and found Kassim where he had left him. Although he was still too weak to stand, the water saved him. Neither had eaten for a week. Hedin left him a second time, and returned to the

pool where he fed on grass and tadpoles and lit a fire and slept.

Two shepherds found him asleep and left food for him before hurrying off to fetch some merchants who were travelling by the river.

When Hadin awoke, the three merchants were standing by him. With them were Kassim and Islam Baï whom they had found in the forest. Islam Baï had followed the only surviving camel, that had led him unerringly to the trees.

Three, then, had lived through the nightmare. Two had succumbed to it, and their bones, bleached by sun, would lie in the sand, perhaps for centuries, along with their camels.

Hedin arrived back in Kashgar in June. Far from being daunted by his experiences in the Takla-makan desert, he was only waiting for fresh equipment from Europe before attacking it again beyond Khotan where he believed there were cities buried in the sand.

By January 1896, Hedin was again furiously active. He had left Kashgar, and passed through the town of Yarkand where he had been horrified to find three-quarters of the 150,000 inhabitants suffering from a kind of tumour of the throat, that swelled sometimes to the size of a melon. Now he had reached Khotan, a city unknown to Europe before the travels of Marco Polo.

With a small caravan that included Islam Baï and two local guides, Hedin struck north, following the Khotan-daria, which the previous year had saved his life. A week later, they left the river and headed into the desert. The circumstances were very different of course, for it was winter. At night the temperature would fall to -6° and the water supply was carried in the form of blocks of ice. Nor was it long before they stumbled on the relics of an ancient Chinese town. 'No explorer,' Hedin wrote jubilantly in his diary, 'had an inkling, hitherto, of the

existence of this ancient city of Yolkan. Here I stand, like the prince in the enchanted wood, having awakened to new life the city which has slumbered for a thousand years.' He found plaster images of Buddha fashioned on the remains of wooden walls; there were traces of apricot orchards and avenues of poplars. Having collected a few relics to take back he was quite content to leave the rest to archaeologists' spades.

Before he left the ruins a sand-storm blew up, so he took the opportunity to measure the rate at which a sand-dune moves; and having calculated the course of the prevailing winds, he worked out that it had taken the sand 2,000 years to extend from the ruins to its present southernmost border.

Archaeologists, from quite different evidence, were later to adjudge the city 2,000 years old.

Continuing across the desert, they camped one evening in a wood and found themselves on the banks of the Keriya-daria. Hedin could not resist the excitement of following the river to its end. No European had ever mapped its course; no one knew where and how it made its last liquid gasp before sinking into the desert.

Unflagging in his desire always to be first, naïvely fascinated at being 'where no European has ever set foot', Hedin followed in delight the Keriya-daria as it wound away across the inhospitable wastes. And all the time there was that sensitive, disarmingly enthusiastic, response to everything he saw, to everything he did. There was the joy of seeing his first wild camel; the thrill of seeing panther tracks or the trail of a fox. To him every mountain dawn, every desert sunset was a wonder. Yet hardened as he had become to the ruthless, uncompromising laws of nature, he himself never grew callous. At nights he would lie awake, haunted by the memory of a camel that of necessity he had left behind in the desert to die alone under the pitiless sun; or of some

lonely shepherd in the night stabbing vainly at a pack of wolves which, overcoming him, buried their fangs in his throat; and always there were the white bones of men, lying by the wayside.

On February 8th he reached his goal. 'I shall never forget,' he said, 'the thrill with which I saw the thin crust of ice end, like the point of an arrow, at the base of a dune.'

150 miles due north flowed the Tarim. Not without misgivings Hedin successfully negotiated this sector of the Takla-makan desert and proceeded along the banks of the Tarim, eastwards towards where it ultimately flowed into the Lop Nor or 'Wandering Lake'. The season was now sufficiently advanced for the ice to have broken up. By fishing-boat he spent a few weeks exploring a tributary of the Tarim, where he poled through tunnels and between corridors of giant reeds. Here wild geese nested by the thousand. Their eggs made excellent eating.

One day while they were resting in the Chinese town of Korla, Islam Baï, Hedin's servant, went into the bazaar. He was talking to a merchant when a Chinese chieftain and four soldiers rode up, bearing on a pole the emblem of the Chinese Emperor. Everyone rose to his feet, except Islam. At once he was seized by the soldiers and soundly flogged. Islam, who was a Russian subject, showed Hedin the marks across his back.

Hedin's reactions were prompt and efficient. He wrote to the Chinese commander, describing the outrage. The commander came and apologised, regretting that the guilty soldiers could not be identified. Whereupon Hedin demanded that the entire troop should be paraded so that Islam could point out the offenders. This was done. Islam had the satisfaction of seeing his chief assailant thrashed as soundly as he had been. No wonder Hedin's servants followed him with such devotion.

When he returned to Khotan he had travelled in a circle whose circumference was well over 1,200 miles.

After a month in Khotan, during which he completed his maps and his notes, Hedin was ready for the last stage of his expedition: this was the marathon trek across Asia to Peking. He accomplished this formidable journey in less than eight months. It was the kind, of course, that he revelled in. For in August he were already negotiating passes up to 17,000 feet. At a spot, called by the Taghliks Bulak-bashi, Hedin had reached the last place for which these tribesmen had a name. From here Hedin was able to record that 'we were to wander long through nameless regions, where no European had ever set foot'. These 'nameless regions' were accurately mapped for the first time. For the first time, too, Hedin led his caravan across the borders of Tibet. For his eight retainers, these were difficult days of snow-storms and mountain-sickness. Fong Shi, the Chinese guide, from whom the indefatigable Hedin was taking Chinese lessons, was so ill he was sent back to Turkestan. Hedin, meanwhile, impervious to storm and no longer affected by dizzy altitudes, busied himself collecting plants and pieces of rock and sketching scenery. He also made a careful map of his route.

Food was becoming scarce. They had shot an occasional wild yak and they had been attacked by a wounded bull that was finally brought to its knees only a few yards from the caravan. Fifty-five days had passed without a glimpse of another human being. It was rather amusing they should have offended the first one they did meet. He was a Mongolian yak-hunter. A member of the expedition immediately shot one of his tame yaks, mistaking it for part of a wild herd.

However, Sven Hedin was a man of great personal charm, and though on this occasion his means of communication were somewhat restricted, it was not long before Dorche—for that was his name—and his family

were reconciled to the friendly stranger, and Dorche was acting as Hedin's guide among his tribesmen and—inevitably—teaching him Mongolian.

October, and the caravan moved on between the Tibetan mountains and the great plain of Tsaidam, with Peking still 1,250 miles away. They had come to the land of the Tangut robbers. These savage bands of robbers attacked all caravans they imagined they could overwhelm. Hedin's, however, although limited to three rifles, was well organised. When twelve of these armed horsemen rode up menacingly to within a hundred yards of the caravan, they found its members well protected and well placed behind the rocks. They were not used to such quick and purposeful action. They retired and did not return until night. But under cover of darkness they stole upon the camp where they were hotly received by the camp dogs and by the sound of banging saucepans from the tents. When camp was struck next day, the robbers returned and were seen scratching about among what remained. Bits of newspaper, empty match-boxes must clearly have mystified and intimidated them, for they were not seen again, and since, among these marauders, news travelled fast, the caravan was left severely alone.

When late in November they arrived at Sining they were crossing a narrow belt of civilisation. There were English missionaries there, though Peking was still seven hundred miles away. The caravan broke up at Sining. Taking only Islam Baï with him, Hedin reached the Hwang-ho, the first Asiatic river he had crossed in Asia with an outlet to the ocean. The Hwang-ho was thick with ice and at times the temperature dropped as low as -27° . An icy north wind, sometimes of hurricane force, whipped down from the Gobi desert, as week after week they followed the curves of the river. There was nothing to see to the north, not even the black tents of the

Mongols; the empty desert was covered in swirling clouds of dust. For a while, hugging the river-bank, they could see to the south part of the Great Wall of China—that miracle of endeavour, which, it has been said, alone of man's creations, could be identified from the moon.

The cold remained intense. As he rode his camel, Hedin carried a pan of hot coals on his lap. With this he was able to ward off the dangers of frost-bite.

At Kalgan, four days' journey from Peking, he hired a palankeen, borne by two mules. Thus he entered the south gates of the city to receive acclaim worthy of his venture.

Sven Hedin had become an international name. The Geographical Societies of the world honoured him. He was entertained by kings. 'I was showered,' he wrote later, 'with medals and royal distinctions.' And how he loved it all. Never, in fact, did his reputation stand higher. There were other expeditions to come, it is true, and these confirmed his greatness, but there were world wars to come too, and Sven Hedin, however honest his motives, was not cut out for politics.

On Midsummer Day, 1899, Hedin again left Stockholm for the heart of Asia. 'For the three years,' he said, 'that this journey was to last, my first rule was to visit only regions where no one had been before, and the majority of my 1,149 maps actually represented hitherto unexplored land.'

After travelling 3,000 miles by train he reached Andistan in Russian Turkestan, where Islam Baï, wearing a blue cloak and King Oscar's gold medal, was waiting to greet him.

Hedin's first objective was to map the course of the Tarim. For this purpose, he journeyed again to Merket on the Yarkand-daria, where he bought two small boats and a thirty-foot barge, in the middle of which a small cabin was built where he could work, as well as watch

the river. The river-party consisted of six men and numerous dogs, sheep and poultry; there was also one tame goose. To the startled ears of the shepherds, it sounded like a mobile farmyard. The caravan went on ahead; the two parties were to meet at Yangi-kul where the river by December would have frozen, and the lake would become their headquarters.

It was a remarkable journey. There was, first of all, the exhilarating fact that no one else had ever accomplished it. Then there was the fascination of the wild life in the water and on the shore. There were swans and ducks and eagles, and numerous fish that willingly accepted the bait on the fish-hooks; there were deer that came nervously to the water's edge to drink, and boars rooting about in the reeds; foxes stalked the ducks, and in the sand were the pug-marks of tiger. Across the sky, seeking warmer climates, flew wave after wave of wild geese. At the same time there were hazards. The barge was steered by long poles, but when the current became especially swift these were not always very suitable, and where the river ran deep, deeper than the length of the poles, these were clearly useless. It was at a point where the river was both swift and deep that they saw ahead of them a fallen poplar stretched more than half-way across their path. They sped impotently towards it. One of the crew dived into the water and tried tugging the boat away from the obstruction; Hedin hastily packed all that was valuable in a case while the rest of the crew tried to row away with improvised oars. Then just before the moment of impact the current swung round the head of the tree, in foaming eddies, and took the barge with it. The barge bucked about in the racing water, steadied itself and went racing on. 'What', Hedin observed, 'if this adventure had happened at night!' What indeed!

There were uncomfortable moments too where the

river narrowed and flowed between high perpendicular walls of earth and sand. From the constant alternation of frost and thaw, great blocks got loose and slipped into the water. On one occasion the entire barge was lost in spray and narrowly avoided capsizing. But in its gentler moods the river was very beautiful. It was autumn, and the wind swept the leaves down on to the water, and they covered it in their millions, all yellow brown and red, swaying about like tiny paper boats. So among the fluttering leaves the barge arrived at Yangi-kul. The fire they lit that December evening was kept burning until the following May. In December 1901 Hedin set out into the Gobi desert to make his invaluable contribution to the world of archaeology.

It is not surprising that Lou-lan, 'the sleeping town', had been allowed to sleep. To trek to it was an arduous affair, even in winter. In summer it could have been disastrous. As it was, the camels barely survived; the water supply gave out, and the camels went twelve days without any.

The dried-up course of the Kuruk-daria that they followed to the lake—the Lop Nor—on which the city once stood, had been arid for hundreds of years, but in the sands Hedin found the skeleton of a long dead civilisation, dead some 1,700 years.

Parts of the wooden houses still stood upright. There was a wooden frame with the door still upon it, wide open, as if some ghost had fled through it in the night. They found the bones of domestic animals; they picked up Chinese coins, ear-rings; deeper in the sand they discovered intricately carved woodwork patterned with seated Buddhas; an old carpet; and then at last they found what, above all, Hedin had hoped to find: fragments of letters and books, that had been written between A.D. 150—200

All these, of course, were translated. As one reads

these curious documents, the ruined town seems to rise again; the temple looks out across the reedy shores of the lake; the children play before their wooden houses; people walk again in the streets and drink at the inn and visit the hospital and call at the post-office and buy their silks and woollen rugs and shoes and glass and fishing-tackle from the shops. Miss Yin has died: 'having been without any previous illness, the misfortune that so suddenly befell her was quite beyond expectation. I received the sad news and so much greater is my deep-felt sympathy and regret. But a deep wound cannot be endured. What then can help?'

Chao Tsi's family is short of food. He writes: 'I now inform you that those at home have sent to Tienki Wang Heh in Nan-chou to get permission to receive fifty bushels of grain so that they may have enough to eat.'

So they lived and loved and grew anxious, never believing that the town round which they wove their lives would, like them, one day perish in the sands.

From Hedin's findings and from those of archaeologists, who came after him, Professor Conrady of Leipzig published a book on Lou-lan, in which its political, social and economic history is meticulously reconstructed. In its hey-day, the town was heavily garrisoned for it stood along the famous silk road linking East and West. Caravans passed through it from Peking and Rome and from the cities of Persia and Syria, until in the fourth century A.D., the Chinese empire tottered and barbarian hordes swarmed the walls of her distant outposts. It was then that Lou-lan was swept off the face of the civilised world.

Hedin did not again return to Lou-lan, but during the following winter he made an exhaustive study of the Tarim delta, of the river-beds, both watered and dry, which flowed or had once flowed in the region of the desert city.

He located the Lop Nor about one degree south of its position marked on Chinese maps, a position thus corresponding to that of the lake called the Kara-koshun. The drying up of one river, the altered course of another had therefore caused the Lop Nor on which Lou-lan had been built to 'wander south'. Hedin followed this jig-saw puzzle of dried-up waterways and strings of lakes with intense scrutiny. He finally came to the conclusion that the new Lop Nor was again on its 'wanderings'—back, he thought, to its original position. Thirty years later he learnt that the lake had indeed returned to its original basin.

In the summer of 1901, Hedin made his only attempt to reach the forbidden city of Lhasa, the Tibetan capital. From his camp, 16,800 feet up in the mountains, he set off with two companions, all of them disguised as pilgrims. Hedin's build, his dark eyes, his furs, his Chinese skull-cap and his rosary, turned him into a convincing Mongol. His instruments, his note-book and other small necessities he carried in secret pockets among the folds of his ox-blood coloured cloak.

This journey had little geographical significance. The motive, as Hedin readily admitted, was curiosity, and a satisfying of that schoolboy sense of adventure that never wholly left him but which constituted part of his charm. He clearly enjoyed his disguise, the necessity of speaking only Mongolian, the novelty of acting the part of servant rather than leader. It was all a little naïve. The Tibetans at any rate were not deceived. Hedin was far too famous in those parts for his movements not to be continually under observation, if not suspicion.

Along the road to Lhasa, the little party was frequently stopped and questioned. The Dalai Lama's spies were on the look-out, and even eight days' journey away from the Holy City, horsemen seem to be shadowing them from distant ridges. Ironically enough, it seemed that only

the robbers were completely deceived. Taking the three men for what indeed they were trying to be, they attacked the camp one night and stole two horses. They must have been extremely shocked when, out of the darkness surrounding the little 'pilgrim' camp, they heard revolver shots.

Perhaps it was these that finally gave them away. For when they were within three or four days from Lhasa, they found themselves confronted by fifty-three armed horsemen who ordered them to halt until Kamba Bombo, the Governor of the region, had seen them. They waited several days, during which time they were constantly questioned. Hedin himself, still acting the servant, was asked to remove his blue Mongolian eye-glasses, which, to their surprise, only revealed a pair of brown Mongolian eyes; they were also ordered to produce their weapons, after which the troop of horsemen galloped about brandishing their swords and generally behaving in a rather unfriendly manner.

Kamba Bombo—later to be killed in action against the British—was firm but polite. He gave Hedin two horses to replace those he had lost, but he did not give him what he most wanted—permission to go on. Hedin took his defeat with a good grace. He decided to travel westwards to Ladak and enter India via Kashmir and the Himalayas. The Tibetans did not object to this, but unwilling to allow him out of their sight they insisted on giving him 'a body-guard' to 'protect' him.

Hedin arrived in India in January 1902. It would have been convenient to return to Stockholm by boat from Bombay. But the men who had accompanied him across Asia, in particular, four faithful Cossacks whom the Tsar had lent him, were distressed at the thought of such a tremendous journey without his leadership. It was typical of Hedin that he did not leave them to fend for themselves.

All his life, Hedin was a prolific writer. The account of this journey alone, which he wrote during the following years, resulted in a book that ran into six volumes.

On the then latest map of Tibet, published by the Royal Geographical Society in 1906 there was a large white spot, north of where the Indus was believed to have its source, marked 'unexplored'. It was Hedin's ambition 'to obliterate that word from the map'.

By June 1906 he had arrived back in India, having reached it overland—a journey that to a less seasoned explorer than Hedin would have been a considerable achievement in itself.

This fifth expedition, and the last Hedin made as an adventurous explorer, heavily taxed his stamina and will-power. He worked for two years in the extreme discomfort and dangers of snow and ice and tremendous altitudes. He crossed and re-crossed 'the white spot', until an entire and unknown range of mountains—now called Transhimalaya—was added to man's knowledge of the earth. The caravan suffered badly in the process. Every one of Hedin's fifty-eight horses perished.

Of equal importance was his discovery of the source of the Indus and of the Brahmaputra. For these achievements the fifth expedition will be remembered, and on them Sven Hedin's reputation as a great explorer can safely rest. His account of the expedition, 'Southern Tibet', extended to nine volumes which, according to Dr. Montell, 'is one of the most comprehensive scientific publications ever produced in Sweden'.

And yet one has a sneaking feeling that it was not for these things that Hedin himself remembered that expedition. He remembered it for a name, Lama Rimpoche, the Holy Monk, a man close to whom he once stood in awed silence but whom he could never meet.

For Lama Rimpoche, then about forty years old, lived in a sealed cave, near the sacred Tibetan town of Shigatse.

He had made 'the most binding and terrible of all monastic vows, namely, to let himself be immured there for the rest of his life'.

The fate of Lama Rimpoche haunted Hedin, and his account of it is powerful and moving.

In the cave was a spring where the monk could drink and under the great slabs of stone at the cave's entrance there was room to slip in a bowl of food every day.

'The walled-in man heard no sound but that of his own voice as he uttered his prayers. Nights were long. But he did not know when the sun went down and the night began. For him there was only darkness unrelieved. He went to sleep; and when he was rested, he awoke, knowing not whether the day had dawned. Summer would near its end. He would become aware of that, because of the falling temperature, and moisture. Winter came, and he froze; spring and summer approached, and the rising temperature afforded him a sensation of well-being. A new year began its course, and one year succeeded another. He was constantly reading his prayers and dreaming of Nirvana. Gradually his grasp of time relaxed; he was not aware how slowly days and nights wore on, for he was always seated on his mat, lost in dreams of Nirvana. He knew that the Kingdom of Heaven could be entered only at the cost of tremendous self-control.

'He grew old, unconscious of the fact. For him, time was static; and yet his life seemed to him like a second, in comparison with the eternity of Nirvana. Nobody visited him, except perhaps a spider or a centipede that sometimes ran over his hand. His clothes disintegrated, his nails grew, his hair became long and tangled. He did not notice that his complexion turned quite white, and that his vision weakened, until the light of his eyes went out. He yearned for deliverance. And one day there would come a knock on his door, made by the only friend that

could visit him in the cave. It would be Death, who had come to lead him out of the dark and take him away to the great light in Nirvana.'

In many ways this would seem the ideal moment to leave the great Swedish explorer, as he stood in humility outside the walled-in entrance to the cave; as he stood fascinated and awed, contemplating a will-power that he recognised quite dwarfed his own.

But Hedin was still in his early forties and he lived to the ripe old age of eighty-seven. He returned to Stockholm in 1908 and set to work on his mammoth book, 'Southern Tibet'. The first world war broke out in 1914. Sweden remained neutral, but Hedin's sympathies were clearly on the side of the Germans. For centuries Russia had been Sweden's traditional enemy, and under the devastating leadership of Charles XII, Sweden had humbled her great neighbour. Now by supporting the Germans, Hedin was following tradition. Sentiment must too have played a part; his life's work had been largely inspired by a German teacher, Baron von Richthofen. He therefore became an observer with the German armies, and as such travelled extensively through Asia Minor, Mesopotamia, Syria and Palestine, where he confesses he devoted 'much less attention to the war operations than to those notable countries'.

After the war, and oppressed by the havoc that had followed in its wake, he sailed to America, and by returning home via Japan, Siberia and Finland completed a world tour.

Then, of course, between 1927—1935 there was the great scientific expedition across Asia. It was a vast affair, a kind of itinerant research Institute, composed of Swedish and Chinese scientists and supported by the Deutsche Lufthansa Company, who wanted to explore the possibilities of an air-link between China and Europe. Hedin went as leader and co-ordinator, a role for which

by virtue of his charm, tact and infinite knowledge and experience, he was eminently suited.

At the end of it all the Chinese Government asked Hedin to see if it were possible to revive, in the form of a modern highway, the ancient silk road between China and her distant province of Sinkiang. Hedin set out along the ancient route in a Ford car at the head of a convoy of lorries. In addition to the almost insurmountable difficulties of the terrain, Hedin found himself and his expedition in the middle of a bloody civil war.

War had broken out on account of the cruelty and avarice of the Governor of Sinkiang, Chin Shu-jen. Taxation and corruption and ill-treatment had so inflamed the peasants that they revolted against him; and those of them who were not massacred by the Governor's more powerful forces fled to the hills. In their extremity they appealed to a young Chinese General, Ma Chung-yin, to help them. This remarkable young man, who, in a chequered career, had been admitted, by Chiang Kai-Shek, to the Military Academy, and had also roamed the countryside as a common robber, soon became a serious embarrassment both to the Russians in Turkestan and to the Chinese themselves. Having defeated Chin Shu-jen in various encounters he had set himself up as ruler of huge areas of the province. With his mobile army and his tactical skill, he was now taking on all-comers.

Between the skirmishes and battles ravaging the province, Hedin's expedition picked a wary and precarious path.

More than once it was mistaken for an enemy convoy and fired upon. It cut little ice with General Ma Chung-yin that Hedin's mission had the backing of the Chinese Government. When he wanted petrol he commandeered it; when he wanted transport he commandeered that as well.

The climax came when Hedin refused to part with one of his lorries at the village of Korla.

He had dealt boldly with the undisciplined soldiery which had hampered him during the journey. But on this occasion he misjudged the mood of his captors.

He, and three other members of the expedition, were suddenly seized. They were stripped, their hands were tied behind their backs. A squad of soldiers stood facing them; the bolts of their rifles clicked ominously. It had all happened so quickly that, until the last moment, he did not realise they were going to be shot.

He shouted out that they could have the lorry. There was a tense pause. Was the lorry all they wanted, or did they in fact want their lives? Hedin was released and led in to Chang, the local commandant. Chang apologised. He explained that the war had taken a turn for the worse; General Ma was on the run. He would need not only a lorry, but petrol and a driver. He trusted the Swedish leader would understand. . . . Hedin had no alternative but to understand.

The expedition came to an end in 1935. Hedin did not see his beloved Asia again. His days of exploration were over.

Hedin did little during the years of the second world war to add to his reputation, and much to soil it. He had followed the rise of Germany with interest, and during the Russo-Finnish war, he did his utmost to get the Germans to help the Finns. He failed to do this, but he at least made sure that Germany would not view as hostile acts Sweden's own efforts to support the gallant Finnish armies in their unequal struggle. And yet one is sorry to find him in consultation with all the chief German leaders: Ribbentrop, Goebbels, Goering, even Hitler himself. He listens to their distortions and their lies. One wishes that this had not been so; and one tries to remember that his motives, however tortuous they may seem, sprang from a genuine patriotism.

So we must forget the world of politics, that often unsavoury world in which Sven Hedin moved clumsily and rather naïvely, and remember instead the world of exploration and adventure wherein he was a master. Let us remember 'the lonely roads' along which he travelled with such unflinching courage and irrepressible optimism; and the sights and sounds of wild places on which his traveller's spirit thrived: the mountain-blizzards, the sand-storms; the croak of ravens and the moonlight howling of the wolves.